LORE OF THE BLOODLINES

20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

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Introduction

"A truth that's told with bad intent beats all the lies you can invent."

- William Blake, Auguries of Innocence

These nights I think a lot about my sire. She was irritable, frustratingly enigmatic, spoke half in English and half in Icelandic, and had a tendency to punctuate her lessons with mortal wounds. Regardless, I still miss the insane old bat. She was incredibly intelligent, and once I was released as a vampire (after a grueling dissertation which required me to recite my 100-page thesis from memory while the blood was slowly drained from my body), she lied to me less than any other vampire has.

Now that I think about it, maybe her insistence on the truth was another one of her petty cruelties.

Anyhow, I thought of her a lot as I worked on my compilation of the "truths" of the thirteen Clans a couple of years ago. Having never had a cultural identity that stems back to one of the grandchilder of Caine (or one of the grandchilder's diabolical usurpers), I find the whole concept fascinating. What must it be like to be Embraced into a miniature culture complete with thousands of years of oral history, social expectations, and pre-packaged enemies? Intellectually I understand the nature and scope of the Jyhad, but there must be something galling about having your side chosen for you as soon as your blood leaves your body. Or maybe it's comforting, having such weighty decisions as "who was right" and "why do I need to punch him" taken away from you. Like I said — I find it fascinating as an outside observer.

But the fact that such an outside observer exists reveals the existence of an "outside." For all their perceived dominance in Kindred society, the Clans are not the only vampires that strut, if I might steal from the Bard, upon this great stage of fools. There are the errant Kindred inaccurately collected under the sobriquet of "bloodlines." False starts, biothaumaturgical experiments, and vampires changed by their very faith — nothing binds these vampires together neatly, like a mangled and misunderstood legend of a Biblical grandfather. And yet, while their role in the eternal conflict between the childer of Caine may be small, it is often incredibly impactful.

As such, I provide this corollary to my original study. It would be the work of several lifetimes to find and document every tiny aberration or fleeting dead end that constitutes a variation from one of the thirteen. Instead, I have focused on nine groups that I know for certain have an impact in our little culture war of the dead. From the brain-washed abominations of Tremere magic to vampires twisted by demonic will to the remnants of Clans long thought to be dead, each of these so-called "bloodlines" have their place in society. Even our little family of the Kiasyd make

an appearance, blinking as the light of scholarly research is, for once, turned back upon us. I wonder if my sire would approve.

Of course, you have been very patient through these long nights, childe. Granted, the chains have, I am sure, helped to encourage a certain amount of patience as we carefully sift through all the lies and misunderstandings of our kind. Well, I *say* "we." You still haven't finished your own dissertation, have you? And you must be getting quite hungry. Don't snap at me, childe — I'll have you know that deprivation can be very clarifying to the mind. As you contemplate, let me tell you of the bloodlines. Perhaps their stories will help you understand your own predicament better.

What's In This Book

Each chapter addresses one of nine bloodlines of the modern nights from the perspective of a vampire in it:

Bound by their mutual worship of demons, the **Baali** have become the targets of many Kindred as they corrupt and manipulate vampires and demons like.

The **Daughters of Cacophony** focus on the power of song and voice. They are touched with both madness and artistic insight that other vampires crave.

Created by ancient Tremere experiments, the **Gargoyles** are not-quite-vampires that serve their masters loyally... except when they violently rebel.

The **Harbingers of Skulls** are the last remnants of an ancient Clan with a long-held grudge against the Giovanni. They hide behind a variety of masks, and only some of them are physical.

Misunderstood scholars, the **Kiasyd** are obsessed with mental puzzles. Some believe they are the result of experimentation with the fae, but the truth may be far stranger.

The **Nagaraja** are cannibalistic vampires that lurk in the shadows of Kindred society. They comprise part of the shadowy Sect known as the True Black Hand.

Once one of the thirteen Clans of Caine, before the treachery of the Tremere nearly destroyed them, the **Salubri** now struggle between revenge and morality.

Unsure of their own origins, the putrefying **Samedi** act as voudoun mercenaries among the undead. They don't know if their founder is a vampire or a loa, but they don't seem to care.

Finally, the **True Brujah** manipulate time while seeking to reclaim their place as the true successors of Brujah. They lurk on the strange fringes of the World of Darkness, ready to act.

Each bloodline's chapter starts with some pertinent history, followed by information about how the bloodline interacts and works now. At the end is a wide variety of combination powers, Merits, Flaws, and other mechanical bits for players and Storytellers. Use them or ignore them as you like to expand, refine, and modify typical members of that bloodline.

Storytellers, you're encouraged to read over everything, too. As with **Lore of the Clans**, decide what's true for your chronicles. The selected material presented here is pulled from two decades of **Vampire: The Masquerade,** along with new and intriguing ideas never presented before. Some parts may work perfectly for your chronicle, while others won't. Use what makes sense, and cast the rest into doubt and heresy — this material is meant to work for your game, not to mandate the only way each bloodline can be portrayed.

MARK
KELLY
16

Baali

"I stop fighting my inner demons. We're on the same side now."

– Darynda Jones, *Second Grave on the Left*

The Find

The torch rippled in the descent. Not from gusts of air – no living being could survive with the small amount of air in the catacomb – but with the brisk pace Rodrigo jogged down the once-hidden stairs. Tonight's outcome would be the culmination of years of searching for the lost crypt of Laezar the Sleeper, a legendary creature powerful enough to put the world in an unending dream. Rodrigo and his coven could make that dream whatever they wanted. It was enough to make him shiver with anticipation at the thought.

He laid his torch down for a moment to push a coffin's heavy stone lid to the side. Never before had Rodrigo wished the supreme might of the Brujah was within his purview. It eventually shifted enough to the side that he could reach his arm inside and feel for the thing he came for.

Bits of bone… cobwebs… insects… smooth metal. There it was. He pulled a beautifully crafted silver cup from the coffin and kissed it in his excitement, then spit the dirt out and wiped his mouth. "I've found you!" he yelled in delight.

"Put the cup down and back away with your hands up," spoke a voice from behind Rodrigo.

Rodrigo didn't dare to turn around. The voice probably had a gun as well — other treasure hunters always had guns. He wished the extreme toughness he'd seen a Gangrel display was also something he had learned to harness within his undead form. "I'm not walking out of here without the cup," Rodrigo responded.

He reached into the man's deepest thoughts and sins and sensed that the stranger had not anticipated resistance. This particular subject suffered from an unspeakable guilt of letting down his family, giving up on them to become a bounty hunter. Rodrigo could use this.

"It doesn't matter if you get this goblet or not. You probably don't even know what it is. Just that someone paid you to get it. But this artifact will not bring you closer to your family." Rodrigo slid his slippery aura to the man and twisted his victim's consciousness.

"Shut up!" the man screamed, already losing his grip on self-control. "How do you even know any of that?"

"Because I am you. I am a reflection of everything you wanted to be before your family held you back from your dreams. Now you are alone, traipsing through the desert, following random strangers to get your kicks when you'd rather be home in April's arms."

"I never said my wife's name," the man said with a shaking voice.

Rodrigo turned around, baring his fangs with a sly smile. "You didn't have to. Like I said, I am you."

The man dropped his gun and tried to escape, but Rodrigo was much faster. He knocked the man out with a rock to the back of his head. The goblet still needed to be filled with blood, after all.

A Truth You Can Trust

Everything you're about to hear is the truth, unless it's a lie. Only I know which is which, unless I was also lied to. Then we're both up a creek. You'd better stop struggling and listen up, or I'll tighten your bindings even more.

You've heard of the Baali, the demons and devils of the Kindred world, the antichrist split up into a million pieces. But you only think you know what we're all about. I'm going to tell you how it really went down, and then you tell me whether you think the world is truly as you see it. If you interrupt me, you won't like the outcome.

The First People

God is perfect, right? The man in the sky made the world in six days, then had to take a long nap. But that's just the story. Have you ever thought about the things that came before humans? The Baali call them the First People. It took six days to perfect the specimen you see before you, but there were many botched creations prior to humanity. Their remains became part of the Earth, buried deep within the ground to hide God's mistakes from the masses who worshipped him.

The story of the Baali begins with a pair of brothers. Caine and Abel? Ha! That story's been told ad nauseum. It should be abandoned for how boring it is. No, we go back to the brothers Nergal and Moloch. Caine and Abel had already happened and Caine's curse had taken thousands into the Embrace before these brothers were even born. Still, their choices would go on to found the Baali, and set in motion wars and other atrocities.

Nergal and Moloch were Embraced in their early adulthood and traveled the night in search of lost relics. They had an undying love of mysticism and the occult, leading them to excavate tombs and unearth the resting places of long-forgotten entities... the kinds of entities the world was better off never experiencing. They discovered the burial grounds of the First People, but more surprising was they weren't dead. God had buried them alive, but had never given them the ability to die — a gift so many people today misunderstand.

While the brothers were greeted with only pleasant smiles and arms extended in brotherhood, Nergal was a power-hungry Cainite. He went about devouring the blood of the First People, one by one. Moloch had no choice but to join in or be pulled apart by the ones Nergal ignored during his feast. What was created that day were a pair of brothers who were now the two most powerful vampires the world had ever seen. You see, drinking the blood of these prototypes gave Nergal and Moloch a command over the True Names of other creatures in God's creation, specifically some long-lost demons that slept just beyond the veil that separates our world from a thousand others.

Namtaru, Spreader of Plagues

Don't die on me yet. That's not the end of the story, and you'll like this part. So, Nergal was an egotistical man with dreams of ruling the world. His body, and his brother's, had been altered on a spiritual level by the blood of the First People, which attracted disease and vermin to them. The overriding theory among the Baali I've debated this with is that since the First People were God's literal refuse, they

attracted the worst elements of the world. Even mortals began seeing them and their progeny as different from other Cainites, because the Baali now carried an aura of corrupted, tainted power.

From this, they also learned the name of Namtaru, Spreader of Plagues. Namtaru was a demon that the brothers believed held the key to masking this mantle of power, so we… they… could be just as sneaky and secretive as other Cainites. Summoning such an entity would spell death to anyone who got in the brothers' way — and to most of the world. Namtaru wasn't a demon known for understanding the difference between friend or foe — only who he served and those there as sacrifices to his power. This frightened even Moloch, and he decided to betray his brother, turning to the other Clans for help in taking down the now power-drunk Nergal.

Even with the combined might of the Lasombra, Nosferatu, and Toreador working together, Nergal and his followers stood their own and could have been victorious had Moloch not given the Lasombra the location of important relics needed for the summoning ritual and how to destroy them. This was the only way to win, as the brothers had spent a considerable amount of time Embracing an army to ward off such attacks. In the end, Nergal was slain. Sadly, so was Namtaru, the creature's head severed while attempting to break through to this world. That's why we can say his name, you understand. I'd never utter a "living" demon's name so casually; names have power.

What Moloch had not anticipated was the other Clans' intense hatred for the Baali and the power we had at our disposal. Most of our bloodline was slain during the battle, and not just those who followed Nergal. This forced us into hiding for the most part, where we went to lick our wounds and plot our revenge.

In the Shadows

With the death of his brother, Moloch was now the only Baali with powers akin to a god. He became Ba'al-Hammon, which inspired our bloodline's name. He had the mind of an expert strategist, and stayed in the shadows waiting for the right time to call upon demons for aid. The end will be here soon enough without our intervention, but it doesn't hurt to help it along now and again.

Long ago, we were painted as abominations — the boogeymen who lived in the woods, snatching up children and summoning demons to slaughter those Cainites who would dare track us down. To the Greeks, we were creatures from Hades, and when the monotheistic religions took root, we became followers of the Devil. Rumors aside, we were at the fall of Rome. We saw the fires of Pompeii, and we've witnessed genocides from Cambodia to Germany. The fact that we are there whenever something cataclysmic has occurred could just be coincidence, but the Baali believe our very presence brings with it the end of the world and a possible return of the First People. Holy symbols work on us because we are not like other Cainites. We are worlds apart.

Now, I've been talking about God, but the truth is that no one really knows where vampires are from. Caine could have been one of the First People for all we know, and the Embrace is but one of a thousand possible versions. History is written by the victors, after all. All of that illustrates my point: the Baali have never been the devils that everyone thinks we are. Our bloodline is a lot more anti-God than it is pro-Devil, especially since the idea of the Devil is preposterous. We control demons and devils, and never have we even heard of one like what has been described in the Bible.

But I know more than your average Baali, since I've heard voices from beyond the veil. Only a few of us have. The ignorant say there was a third original Baali besides Nergal and Moloch, and that the fall of our bloodline had to do with sibling rivalry instead of Moloch's cowardice. Some say God personally reached down and cursed the Baali twice what other Cainites suffer. I believe it is what makes us truly unique. We suffer the most, and still reject God's authority.

Swallowing Up the Weak

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention our revenant family, the D'Habi. They were instrumental to the Baali's continued existence through much of the Dark Ages. Turns out, it becomes even harder to survive when the world blames you for causing the Black Plague. The D'Habi aren't really one family, but are instead scattered from shore to shore and cultivated by individual Baali circles to serve in whatever manner they choose. It is said that some of them were originally fed droplets of Nergal's blood, making them intensely loyal to the Baali bloodline. Nergal's vitae was so potent that even the humans' offspring were willing to serve before taking they own taste. Coupled with the fact that the families have instituted their own measures to keep each other in line and loyal to the Baali, we know the D'Habi won't stray any time soon.

Of course, what were once humans that helped us to blend into the world are now just as corrupted as we are. Stand a D'Habi next to your average everyday person and you can instantly tell the difference. Our revenants are often sniveling, crawling beings. That is as we like it, since we do not make any illusions to keeping those close to us away from our darkness or the truth about the world's utter spiral into chaos and destruction. You can imagine what that can do to a weak mind, right? This makes them less useful for espionage, since cracking under pressure doesn't make one a great spy. However, we have many, many other spies.

The Baali eventually gained fellow infernalists among the rest of the Cainites. Azaneal was a powerful Baali who infiltrated the intricacies of the Catholic Church, eventually gaining the highest authority he could without becoming the pope himself. Along the way he corrupted and converted several with the Baali bloodline into his own heresy, believing that vampires were the tools of Satan against the world. It became his responsibility to play out his role until judgement day arrived, and he brought hundreds of Baali (called Azaneali) and Lasombra (called Angellis Ater) together under one banner. These half-Baali, these Angellis Ater, manipulated the shadows, as obsessed with the idea of darkness and the abyss as they were with the infernal.

When the Baali rose recently from their hiding (just as Moloch said they would), their first order was to absorb this group into the bloodline once more. It took a number of calculated strikes against the Inquisition to do so, but only a handful of anything but pure Baali exist now.

You seem confused. How do we re-Embrace other vampires, you ask? Well, unlike other Clans, our blood runs with the power of the First People, allowing us to Embrace with our own vitae which can override another's weak blood. The process is the same, however; we drain the initiate of their blood, cut our wrists, and feed them our own. Our vitae rewrites their supernatural makeup, thus re-Embracing them into our bloodline. It is rumored that lower Generation Baali actually have pieces of the First People's flesh they can feed to an initiate that causes the change instantly without the exchange of fluids. This is the real reason other vampires fear us. Because they know, with little more than a choice, they can be us.

Modern Devils

For the longest time, the Baali stayed hidden in the shadows, hiding from the likes of other Kindred looking to take us out. To them, we're irredeemable beings who are out to destroy the world with demonic legions we have at our beck and call. Let me tell you how it really is.

Are We Without Hearts?

Honestly, it hurts my feelings that you think I'm a lost cause. Other Kindred like to congratulate themselves for resisting their dark sides and flagellate themselves if they step out of line. Why is this the best way to live? Why does the Beast have to be this thing vampires fight against? If you make a deal with your Beast and tell it "I'll give you something else to torment besides me," it can become quite the comrade. That is one of our tricks, by the way. Demons listen to us because they fear the thing we have inside of us. Our bloodline is potent enough to browbeat even the strongest demon into a cage of our design, one we have control over.

"But you worship evil," you think. Yes and no. Certain rituals need to be put into place for us to summon the correct demons and get what we need from them. We worship those demons like a cat worships their human owner. We're smart enough to do just enough to get what we need without too much involvement. If you do it right, the demon starts to feed you without you even asking, in the hopes of future affection.

Of course there are those Baali who go overboard. Everyone's got to have their rotten apple. Thing is, we like to have some of our apples are rotten as possible. Every coven of Baali has one or two fools among them who are carefully groomed into the icon of what other Kindred see us as. They dress the part, talk the part, they are the part because that's what we've painted them to be. We call them our Nergals, the boisterous ones among the Baali that the rest of us put up as sacrifice. Once the Nergal is killed by the Camarilla, the White Tower can pat themselves on the back for ridding the world of another horrible creature, and the search for the rest of us eases for a time. Gives us a chance to pay attention to what is truly important.

Every death is precious, as I said before. This is just one example of how the death of a Baali can have meaning beyond what is obvious. The same is true of the sacrifices we offer in the demon rituals. We are giving them the chance to be part of something larger than themselves. Does this make us cruel? I'd argue that it makes us as pragmatic as any other vampire who bites into a victim's neck. The Baali just take it a step further and fully commit to our monstrous nature, and we are vilified for this fact. Sad, isn't it?

How We Are Viewed

The Nergals aren't the only ones who bear the markings of the obscenely anti-religious. If you call a group of people

evil and abominations and heathens for so long, that's exactly what they'll become. It's basic human nature, and we still contain at least small traces of humanity, don't we?

They call us infernalists. This is true, but I know many Baali who wish they could be open about their demon cavorting. The Gangrel are left to their animalistic devices and aren't chastised for it. The Nosferatu wear their sin on their face, and yet some still look at them, and even get used to them along the way. Even the Tremere have a seat at the Kindred table, and look at some of the sick shit they've done. Vampires create their own hierarchy and worship of themselves, and yet they dare to look down on us for our practices, calling us weak-willed or instruments of evil. We are not weak. Consorting with demons is not without risk, and I've seen more than one Baali lose the test of bravery at a crucial time and be devoured in an instant. Anyone who thinks what we do is without merit and lacks strength, like it's some coward's path, has never come face to face with a filth demon or a revenge devil.

They call us antichrists. It is true that we use the whole satanic thing to great effect. Dressing in lots of black clothing and demonic imagery evokes a strong reaction, and it's often how we get our kicks. I know a Baali who has an upside-down cross tattooed on his forehead. Certain people are drawn to that kind of acting out everyday, but it can even just be fun for a night of rabble rousing and painting the town red when in the mood. It also acts as a serious "fuck you" to the establishment and the others who hunt us down. They believe in all this Caine, curse, God bullshit, and we like to let them know we're not having any of it.

They call us boogeymen, and this one is the clearest. Remember that whole re-Embracing the Baali are capable of doing? This is the reason why we are feared so much. We speak the unapologetic truth of the world, of the universe, of the death of all things, and convince others to join our bloodline — to become one of us. Other groups may work together for a time, but they simply become a gang of Kindred who eventually tear each other apart despite their blood bonds and supernatural leashes on each other. The Baali assimilate other vampires into our numbers and make them like we are. What most don't understand is this must be a voluntary choice. Accepting Baali blood only overrides one's original vitae if they wish it so. So, who are the real monsters: those who offer others the truth — and the choice to become what they see fit? Or the ones who would keep each other blind with lies, and rob each other of their free will?

Excavations

While the Nergals are out there hamming it up for everyone to gasp at, there are a fair number of us who have more important business to handle. Summoning demons, especially the more powerful entities, requires a lot of preparation. This can include collecting the right sacrifices, obtaining magical relics, and the tracking down the locations of several types of remains. We are swimming in remains a lot of the time.

This sends the Baali on dangerous voyages around the world in search of these items and places. Not only do we find the mausoleums and artifacts we seek, but we often find ones we never dreamed of encountering. In just the last three years, the Baali have unearthed two separate tombs containing ancient mummified sarcophagi of "cursed ones." That's a fancy term for husks that contain fragments of a demon's soul. It is believed that finding just one more will mean the summoning of a certain demon of lies (of which I will not say the name). Just imagine what treasures could be garnered with that kind of power in our clutches.

Of course, I've been speaking of the Baali in general terms, but not every Baali is on the same team. In fact, each coven of Baali consists of thirteen members who all answer to a higher lord, most likely their collective sire, who is themselves one of thirteen, and so on and so on. That means we don't all work together all the time. We are quite aggressive against other Baali, as a matter of fact. This has led to many small civil wars that our numbers simply can't support. Making sure any uncovered relics do not end up in the wrong hands is important; the wrong hands being any hands that don't belong to my coven alone. If another coven nabs it, then they grow more powerful, and even non-petty Baali have a way of taking out the competition — often preemptively.

All of this goes to illustrate that we're not all the monsters other Clans make us out to be. We are archeologists and researchers, always looking for the next prize. Of course, the things we unearth are quite evil, but what isn't, in this world of vampires?

The End is Nigh

Stop squirming. We're almost to the end.

Let's talk about the nature of death. I've mentioned it a few times, but I don't know if you've truly comprehended my words. The world is doomed. All anyone needs to do is look around to see the depravity that dilutes the spirit of the Earth and all its inhabitants. Some outright blame the

Baali for where the world has gone, but it began its slow march to death long before we drank our first drop of blood.

Gehenna is only one theory on how the world will end. The Antediluvians haven't been very active in these modern nights, at least as far as I've seen. Demons, on the other hand, are constantly reaching out and looking for a way to cross over into this world. For every demon a Baali summons forth with so-called "evil" blood rituals, there are another two who slip in through the cracks created from a world on the verge of collapse.

With that in mind, could you blame the Baali for wanting something out of this whole thing? If the end is nigh, why not make your final days a conflagration of fire and blood and death and power? All Baali know this, and profiting from whatever you can take from the world in the meantime is a foundation upon which the bloodline is built. Every demon we let into this world hastens the clock toward the ultimate midnight where the Earth splits in two. And some of the other vampires are starting to catch onto the truth.

This is why some are so intent on hunting and killing us. Kindred fear the inevitable, and especially hate what they cannot control. They cling to their existence in a way that might convince you they weren't half-dead. The Baali, however, have reconciled with the destruction that is to come. No one will make it out alive, so why even try? Why not bring the end about sooner — and on our own terms?

In short: We're here to bring death to everyone. Before you die, though, would you like to join us?

Character and Traits

Concepts

Entrepreneur

You've always been a people person. When it came to grade school, you were always picked first and never disparaged any opportunity to get up in front of the class and give a speech. After graduation, you were on the fast track to success, always the talk of the town. And then, you were chosen by the Baali to become their face to the masses.

It's not as public as you'd like it to be, but you still get to speak to crowds of people looking for direction in their lives. And you're here to give it to them with a "You can do it" or a "You know you're better than that!" From the masses, you pick one of two lucky people per month to join your own coven or help them make their own, with you as their mentor. They make sacrifices to you for your mentorship, and you in turn give them the encouragement to keep on doing so. Not everyone is cracked up to be a Baali, and the weak get fed to the strong (sometimes quite literally), but it makes you lots of money, and all the blood you can drink isn't bad. All and all, it's one of the best pyramid schemes.

Demon Magnet

Not only are you a demon whisperer like other Baali, you seem to always become caught in the machinations of some demonic plot. This can be a good thing or a very bad thing. Sometimes the demon needs your help specifically to become free, luring you to secret locations and communicating the instructions to set them loose on the world through cracked mirrors and whispered messages. The subtlety they display can be sobering, and

you help to summon them in exchange for their assistance in whatever web you've spun yourself.

Then there are the demons who come to you at all hours of the night, while you are trying to relax, while you are trying to hide from the Sabbat attack squad, while you are trying to do anything other than deal with a demon. You help these creatures in exchange for them leaving you the hell alone. Sometimes you wonder which is the better deal: power or solitude. Regardless of what the answer truly is, demons infest your haven, your coven ritual room, your car, and every other aspect of your life.

Relic Hunter

Some would say you watched way too many Indiana Jones movies when you were a kid, but they didn't realize what kind of future you were going to embark upon. Being Embraced by the Baali was ironically a godsend, fulfilling your destiny of becoming an adventurer looking to find lost treasures and tombs. The bloodline doesn't pay for your gallivanting, of course, but you've had a pretty penny stored up since you were little. It is more than enough to keep up this life style for a few years at least, as you chase one lead after another in the hopes of uncovering something your coven can use to strengthen their power.

Your time is spent jumping on high-speed planes to travel during the day and spending entire nights digging holes to find hidden secrets. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't, but this is certainly the "life" you've always wanted. You'll only hand up your battered fedora when the money's gone or you've completed your journey to death.

Merits and Flaws

The High Price (3pt. Merit)

The burden of acquiring truth or power always comes at a high price. None know that more than these Baali, who sacrifice a part of their own soul in aspiration of greatness. Their physical body is wracked with weakness and pain, capping any Physical Attributes at four dots and costing 1 Willpower point every evening when they rise. In exchange for this tribute, the Baali receive +2 dice to any Discipline-related checks.

Simply Waiting (4pt. Merit)

The Baali knows their place within the order of the universe, and where they stand against other vampires or those of their own bloodline. They also know the end of the world is coming, sooner rather than later. They appear apathetic to the world around them, but in truth, they are simply resigned to their fate and remain unmoved if others try to get them to stray from their path. All Social rolls against them are increased by +2 difficulty, as the Baali knows the true end of it all.

Carrion Presence (2pt. Flaw)

This affliction represents the Baali's true connection to the decrepitude their bloodline commands. Pestilence is attracted to the Baali; flies leave their delicious carcasses to circle around the vampire, rats crawl along their limbs and squeak their praises, and vultures can be seen circling them at almost all times. The degree to which they are afflicted differs from character to character, but there is no getting rid of their swarm. Swatting their flies simply calls others to take their place. While quite disgusting to most, these vampires wear such a thing with pride. It does, however, make dealing in non-Baali circles quite difficult.

Dark Aura (3pt. Flaw)

Even without the use of Auspex, the Baali seems somehow wrong to anyone they interact with, emitting a terrifying aura of sickness and power. The character is always at a slight disadvantage when dealing with other vampires or those touched by the divine, as they sense the depravity of the Baali's soul. Baali with this Flaw suffer a +2 difficulty to all Social rolls, unless they are using Intimidation. To those who use Auspex to view the Baali's aura, it appears as a thin, red mist surrounding the character with the occasional watchful eyes appearing within.

Plague of Demons (4pt. Flaw)

No matter what, demons are constantly drawn to the Baali. Once in a while, this can be a benefit (Baali with this Flaw are at -1 difficult to summon a particular demon), but most of the time these nefarious spirits are distractions. They scream in the Baali's ear, tug at her clothes, or screw with her possessions... and always at the worst possible moment. The character is at +1 difficulty for any rolls involving Perception. Further, once per session, the Storyteller can convert one of the Baali's dice rolls into a botch.

Combo Disciplines

Command the Swarm (Daimoinon ••, Animalism •)

The more powerful a Baali becomes, the more corrupted their form. Putrid insects and shadowy vermin

Re-Embrace Effects

No Successes	No effect; the childer writhes in pain until they meet Final Death.
1 Success	While the transformation is complete, the childer will forever appear with an aura of one who has committed diablerie.
2 Successes	The process transforms the childer's soul, but their undead body could not retain much of its power. They lose one dot of a Discipline they know.
3 Successes	The childer is so overcome with Namtaru's soul, that they enter a coma for (10 – childer's Stamina) days. Once they awaken, they have joined the ranks of the Baali.
4 Successes	The ritual is a complete success, with no negative impact on the character.
5+ Successes	Not only are they transformed, but the childer's body and soul embrace their new life as a Baali. The childer receive Daimoinon • for free.

begin to encircle them wherever they go, making them a walking anima of death and disease. For Baali with this power, however, these pests become their loyal servants and an extension of their power, allowing them to not only create capable spies, but also use Daimoinon Disciplines far away from their normal capabilities. This certainly explains how someone who crosses a Baali can be cursed without ever seeing them again.

System: With this combo Discipline, the Baali gains the ability to speak to any vermin or insects drawn to them just as if they were using Feral Whispers, but without the need for eye contact. The character may also spend a blood point to enchant either a single member of their swarm or the swarm as a whole and send them to any location with a specified range:

Thirteenth Generation	1 mile/1.5 kilometers
Twelfth Generation	2 miles/3 kilometers
Eleventh Generation	5 miles/8 kilometers
Tenth Generation	10 miles/15 kilometers
Ninth Generation	20 miles/30 kilometers
Eighth Generation	50 miles/75 kilometers

The insect or swarm acts as an extension of the Baali, allowing the character to borrow the swarm's senses to see, hear, and interact with the swarm's surroundings. This also allows him to use Daimoinon abilities through the swarm, although at a cost of an additional blood point.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Alternate Daimoinon Disciplines

••••• •• The Re-Embrace

While most Baali are Embraced in the traditional fashion, at other times, it is the choice of a vampire who wants to leave their blood-tied clan for the Baali's greener pastures. The ritual of Re-Embracing is not a complicated one, but does require a willingness to endure a tortuous realignment of one's soul, or whatever Kindred have left of one.

When The Re-Embrace is invoked, the sire takes their would-be childer by the throat and bleeds them into four bowls inscribed with ancient and demonic runes. This is to remove that which dictates their current state of being, very similar to a normal Embrace. The sire then fills another four bowls with his own blood, surrounding the childer with them in alternating order. At the initiate lies on the ground, bleeding and reaching ever closer to their final death, the sire calls forth a soul fragment of the bloodlines' most powerful demon, Namtaru, and combines it with the childer's soul to corrupt it and draw their spirit closer to that of a Baali. This process can take hours to complete.

If this part of the ritual is completed with finesse and meticulous attention, the childer may just make it out alive. All of the blood in the surrounding bowls flies into the air, entering the childer's mouth, mixing and merging with their new soul in an explosion of dark energy. When they awake, they are now of the Baali bloodline, blasphemous in their glory.

System: The player spends 2 Willpower, and then rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 8) against the target's Willpower (difficulty 7). If the childer is of a lower Generation than the new sire, they receive a +1 dice bonus, as their soul is extra resistant to the change. Leftover successes are then compared to the effects above.

SUCCUBUS
MARK KELLY 16

Daughters of Cacophony

"I'll never make it, it will never happen,
because they're never going to hear me 'cause they're screaming all the time."

–Elvis Presley

Songbird

The blood bag dropped to the floor of the cell with a dull squelch. Despite the unappetizing sound, Eloise snatched it and drained it. Through the gold bars of the cage, Byron watched her, looking pleased with himself as usual. He stepped back and let himself fall heavily onto one of the elegant couches that decorated the underground room. He had assembled all manner of objet d'art here. But over the ages it had become cluttered with artistry. What had been designed as a gallery now looked more like a storeroom. Ownership, rather than appreciation, had consumed him decades ago.

Eloise threw the empty blood bag out between the bars and wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. It was a gesture that might have looked incongruous if her elegant dress was anything more than rags. She glared at Byron, but her loathing only made him smile.

"Sing for me, my little songbird," he commanded.

"When are you letting me out?" replied Eloise.

"We'll see."

"I'm sick of this game. You've kept me here for over a year."

"And have I not looked after you? Seen to your needs? I bring you blood and would happily give you the finest clothes to wear, if I didn't think you'd bite my hand off when I passed them to you."

"You can't."

"I am the Primogen of the Toreador. I can do anything I like. Now sing."

Eloise closed her eyes and gave in to his request. Her voice slid out of her mouth and wrapped lovingly around Byron. He closed his eyes too as the melodies and harmonies glided around the room, glancing like light across the paintings and sculptures. Byron was quickly lost to the music. He began to sway to and fro as the voice swept him away. When the song came to an end, Byron and Eloise opened their eyes at the same time.

"Again," he said.

"No," she replied.

"I don't think I heard you correctly."

"Yes, you did."

"You will do as you are told!" shouted Byron, more desperately than he expected.

"No. You are going to open this cage and release me. Then you are going to commit to several new policies and ensure the Prince and the other Primogen agree. Then, and only then, will I sing for you again."

Byron was dumbstruck and angry, but the echo of her voice was still there in the room. He began to realize how much he needed to hear it.

Eloise seemed to stand taller inside her cage. "I really did think it would take longer to addict such an eminent Toreador," she smiled.

"Sing for me!" shouted Byron desperately.

Eloise stepped closer to the bars. "Kneel for me, and I might," she whispered.

Byron slowly sank to his knees. "Please," he murmured.

Overture

Where did we come from? I'm told it's one of the mysteries of the modern age. All I know are the stories that my sire told me, and her sire told her. Perhaps my sire was the original; perhaps we're actually all just Toreador with a special skill. I can't tell you the truth, as valuable and as elusive such a thing is among us. But I can tell you what I was told, even though it will grant you more questions than answers in the long run.

One of the tales involves three sisters. They all had incredible voices and talent, enough to interest several vampiric Clans. One was embraced by the Toreador, another by the Ventrue, and the third by the Malkavians. However, the divisions of Clan could not keep them apart, and against the orders of their elders they met in secret. Unfortunately, the elders rarely reward disobedience, and each was punished severely.

However, instead of coming to heel, each punishment only made the sisters more determined and cunning. Together, they began to plot a way to escape their Clans and be together. So they started sharing not only their skills but their blood, hoping to bind themselves even more than before. As time passed, they began to grow together, and the ties to their sires gradually weakened. They found new skills and developed new powers as they became more than the sum of their parts. Those they sired claimed that legacy as Daughters of Cacophony.

There are three different stories about their end. In one, they all became like the Toreador, and were so fixated by the harmony they could produce. It is said they became lost one day in a single perfect note and remain frozen forever, listening to a song they cannot stop singing. Another tale blames the Malkavian blood, saying they became crazed by constant music and developed a hatred of it. They sought out musicians and slaughtered them until Clan Toreador captured them. They scream nightly in some deep dungeon to stop the music that only they can hear. The Ventrue tale is simpler. It is said they simply developed a taste for each other's blood. Nothing else would grant them sustenance, so they fell upon each other, and the victor has held the other two prisoners as her personal supply for centuries.

Are any of those stories the truth? I cannot tell you. Perhaps there is a grain in them. But how can you believe one tale when even the stories of our origin in the Victorian era is a lie? It is true that era was a golden age for us. Music halls and theatres could be found in every town. Indeed, competition for the greatest acts was rife, and in an age without television, radio, or phonographs, the people clamored to hear our song. That is not to say such demand had never been the case before. For hundreds of years previously, the wealthy had considered music a valuable accomplishment and entertained each other with song after dinner. But the Victorian age was not just an age of music, it was an age of the performer. We captured hearts from the stage, be it in the charm of the music hall or the drama of the opera.

In the center of the British Empire, new entertainments and musical styles flooded into the capital. Music evolved, shifted, and birthed new movements, a concerto of sound reaching across the ages.

But my sire was born long before this era. Centuries before, hidden as a weapon by an organization few even knew the existence of: the Tal'Mahe'Ra.

The Orchestra of the Black Hand

I am told we were conceived as a weapon originally, although there are again several different stories. Sometime after the fall of Rome, there was a plan to create a small cadre of Toreador who might infiltrate the Camarilla. They were to sing and perform for the cream of vampire society and gently nudge them towards insanity. It was to be a slow descent, as each high ranking Kindred became more and more erratic. By the time anyone realized what had happened and moved to replace the insane leaders, the Camarilla would already be in tatters.

So the Tal'Mahe'Ra assembled some of their best Toreador singers, performers so talented that every Elysium would want them. Then the Sect found a Malkavian to teach them their powers. But it appears things did not go entirely to plan. Some say the Toreador learned too much, while others say it was not enough. Either way, anyone with any sense should have realized that adding a Malvavian to any plan was going to take things in an unexpected direction.

Years became decades, then centuries, and for all the training, controlled Embraces, and manipulation, the Tal'Mahe'Ra was never entirely happy with what we had become. By the Renaissance we were something new, but we were too different to do the job we were designed for. One arm of the Sect wanted us destroyed on principle, as a loose end. Other, more pragmatic voices insisted there must be a use for us somewhere. As you might imagine, we did not get a vote.

Broken Instruments

Left to our own devices, some of us quietly found ways to slip from Tal'Mahe'Ra control. We were careful not to reveal ourselves or betray our origins. Of all the Sects, the Tal'Mahe'Ra is the least forgiving with those who can't keep quiet. Many of us made a living as traveling entertainers among the wealthy. Few Kindred thought of us as anything more than clever Toreador, and our itinerant nature kept too many from asking about our lineage.

Unfortunately, we couldn't keep quiet for long. The music that is our constant companion needed to be free, and as the drawing rooms gave way to music halls and theaters we stepped into the light. We knew the dangers, but we were like moths to a flame. We could offer our voices to hundreds, and we sang. It was beautiful and glorious. But as you might expect, people began to notice that we were different. Questions were raised, and Princes called upon us to explain ourselves.

Luckily, we keep our secrets well. The oldest Daughters remained among the Tal'Mahe'Ra, while only the youngest had been forgotten and slipped through the cracks. On the whole, these childer knew almost nothing of their origin, and those who did stayed quiet. The Tal'Mahe'Ra watched silently, ready to slaughter those of us who revealed too much. A sword of Damocles rested over our entire bloodline. But we remained discrete. We had no interest in politics, and that was enough for us to be left alone. We sang for Princes and they allowed us to stay, even entreated us to join Camarilla society.

So it eventually became time to make a deal. The Tal'Mahe'Ra didn't want us, and the Camarilla did. We made a pact with our old masters that we would never share their secrets, and in turn they would allow us to exist. Sires would tell nothing to their childer of the Tal'Mahe'Ra, and myths would be allowed to grow in place of truth. Some of us stayed with the Tal'Mahe'Ra, including many of our original elders. Those of us who know of our origin know that if we share the tale, our eldest will be the first to pay the price. Some of us share the truth with those we trust. We are, after all, still Kindred, and anyone who trusts a Kindred to keep their word is a fool. But on the whole, we keep the secret; the stakes are too high not to.

There is one thing about the tale that always makes me wonder. As much as we were part of a plan to destroy the Camarilla, the Tal'Mahe'Ra had another scheme to destroy the Sabbat. The Sword of Caine is no less dangerous or smaller a threat to their secrecy and agenda. So there must have been another failed experiment. I often wonder what might have happened to that, if it existed, and if some other bloodline out there is, in truth, our sisters.

Our Own Song

As the Victorian age gave way to the new era of technology and science of the modern age, we have remade ourselves anew. Seen one way, we are a forgotten remnant of a failed experiment; in another light, a new butterfly freed from a cocoon. We can make our own choices at last, carve our own destiny. We are at last able to ask the important question – what do we want?

The modern age has taken something from us, though. The music halls are mostly gone in an age of recorded music. Some of us can bring our powers to bear on recorded media, but even those who can still yearn for the thrill of performing

in front of a live audience. It is true there are huge stadium concerts where we might sing to thousands, but with that comes a dangerous level of fame, more than enough to uncover our true nature. So we have had to remain small and quiet, playing to late night audiences in exclusive places. Many of us have found a home of sorts among the Toreador, who of all the Clans respect our abilities the most.

So on one hand we have changed so very much. We have gained our freedom—not hard won but quietly slid out from the clutches of a sleeping giant's hand. We have made a place for ourselves and found a neutral niche among the politics of the Damned. But on the other hand, we are as we have always been. Like music, we adapt and gain new melodies, but the essential nature of what we are remains as it has done for hundreds of years. We, like the music, are eternal.

Now, the Camarilla has become our home of a sort, which I sometimes wonder might have been the Black Hand's plan all along. But we take no power there. To rise too high or pledge too much loyalty might bring the ire of the Tal'Mahe'Ra on all of us, and while those of us bound to the Camarilla hope they would protect us from our old associations, we realize it is a feeble hope at best. A great many of us remain independent of any Sect. Better to risk unlife alone than forever feel like the pawn of an ancient indoctrination. When I think about this, I am always concerned that fear has made too many of our choices.

But, we are as safe as we can be, so the song continues. You might believe me, or you may not. I am a liar like everyone else. By all means share the story as you will, and if one day you disappear, then I'll finally know my sire was telling me the truth.

The Modern Aria

Wherever we came from, we are here now. While many consider us a limited form of bastard Toreador or Malkavian, I prefer to think of myself as a specialist. However, anything that ensures we remain in the shadows suits us well. Let the others fight for power and glory; we have what we want already. We have music, and that is all any of us could really ask for.

The Fugue

Unlike other Clans and bloodlines, we Daughters do not suffer a particular curse. However, the gift we refer to

as "The Fugue" might still be considered a weakness. Put simply, we constantly hear music. The tune is different for each Daughter. Some of us hear violins, some an orchestra, some pounding drums, and a few a chorus of screams. Each Fugue is unique to the Daughter who hears it, and while it has driven some of us mad, it is always beautiful in its own way.

No one knows with any certainty why we hear this music. But the most popular theory is that we are connected in a way to the heartbeat of humanity. We are the children of blood and rhythm, and so it makes sense that we might hear the pulse of blood through the veins of the kine. This music is not easily translated into a single beat. There are billions of people in the world, each with their own cadence. Each is their own instrument in a vast orchestra that we each hear only a small refrain from. Each Daughter's Fugue shows something of her connection to the kine, her feel for their blood and the song it sings in their veins.

Banshees

Maybe it's our alleged Malkavian heritage or maybe hearing music all the time is enough, but sometimes we lose it. Now, plenty of us have problems. You don't live forever and not gather a few issues. But every now and again, some of us fall apart in the worst way. We're not talking a few days of counseling; we're talking lost on the moors batshit crazy.

We call these Daughters "Banshees," and it is easy to see why. They have become slaves to the Fugue. The music inside them has taken control to such a degree that there is nothing left of who they were. They become lost souls, constantly singing the only song they know. Unfortunately, that song is not only a danger to them. Banshees use all their power to kill anything that crosses their path. They are raving maniacs, and the only way to stop them is to put them down permanently.

Deeper Notes

I suppose we should address the issue of men within our bloodline. We have been accused of all kinds of conspiracies to keep men from our secrets. Many believe our powers can only be commanded by women, or that we slaughter the men who learn our techniques. Some even suggest we secretly plot the ascendance of women among all the Clans, and that our very name is proof of this. As usual, the truth is far simpler.

We don't hate men, or even refuse to Embrace them. Every now and then, a girl needs a little bit of bass, after all. However, we began as a sisterhood, and most of us just like it that way. In our experience, too many men try to dominate and control whatever they are part of. Those of us born before the modern nights just weren't willing to hand over what we had so easily.

There are also practical reasons we tend not to take on male childer. Most of our power comes from our voices, and it's easier to train someone with the same vocal range. Men and women often require different vocal techniques to make the best of their voice. What works well for a soprano might not be so good for a tenor or bass. So where men are Embraced, they tend to have a range similar to their sire. A soulful jazz songstress might find a man's vocal range closer to her own, where another sire might pick a young boy soprano or castrato as her apprentice. But times change, and these days, a few men who get past their privilege and play fair are allowed to join us. So we do allow men to be Embraced, although it happens rarely.

However, we have no plans to change our name or make a point of inviting more men to even the balance. Just as so many women have had to be better to get ahead in a man's world, we hold the men we Embrace to a higher standard. Some like to call themselves the "sons of discord" just to assuage their vanity, but I know a French daughter who insists we are "Les Chanteuse du Mal," and we're not changing to that either. There is no sub-bloodline or secret sect of men. If any of our childer have a problem being known as Daughters of Cacophony, maybe eternity isn't for them.

Factions

We may not be especially numerous, but there are still groups and factions of our bloodline in the world. However, we often tend to avoid our own company too much. Part of the reason we have managed to remain neutral is that we are not perceived as a threat. When we assemble in groups, we tend to make the other Kindred nervous. So in many cases we tend to spread out, leaving to find another city if one of our kind is already in residence.

However, there are some places we have clustered a little. The cities most associated with music draw us to them. Salzburg and Vienna (despite the Tremere) maintain their legacy of Mozart and the classics. But the jazz of New Orleans and the soulfulness of Paris also claim our hearts. New York and London with their cauldron of styles and art are like a home to us. But almost every major city has at least one of us in residence, and many of us stay in touch. It provides us with a very wide net to catch news, gossip, and politics. Let us hope the other Clans don't decide to count our numbers one day, as our ubiquity (albeit a diluted one) might give them pause.

Generally, the factions among us are small, but some maintain contact from city to city. Some of our factions tend to gather together. So where a group of us is to be found in one place, they will almost certainly be part of the same faction.

Choristers

While most of us prefer to remain solitary, a few of us like to keep their sisters close in their solitude. The voice is more powerful in a choir, and so it has often proved the case with our powers. It seems the Fugue is often of great benefit to us when working together. While we all hear a different melody, the underlying tune is the same, and it can be of great help in coordinating together. The Choristers have several reasons for gathering together, but in many cases, it is simply for mutual support. Being outside most Kindred politics might sound safer, but it actually leaves you with few allies.

Choristers usually have great control over Melpominee, and seek out ways to become more than the sum of their parts when working together. They form very intimate groups made only of fellow Daughters. When they exert their power, they are truly formidable, but it is unclear whether this is because they are Daughters or because they have learned how to work together for the best effect, like any other group.

Whatever the case, many other Daughters are highly concerned about the growth of Choristers. For a start, gathering together makes other people nervous, and the last thing our tiny bloodline needs is too much attention. That they prove even more dangerous when together only makes things worse. The secretiveness of such groups and extremely insular nature also makes a lot of powerful people wonder what they are hiding. A few Daughters wonder if they are hiding something from the rest of us too! However, a recent concern has been raised that perhaps this flocking together is actually part of the original Tal'Mahe'Ra plan. Perhaps the experiment isn't actually over, and something will drive us all to gather together and join a great song that will tear everything apart.

Soloists

Most of us prefer to keep to ourselves and avoid each other's company. The opposite of the Choristers is practically the default for our bloodline. The problem of us coming together is this; few of us are good at sharing the spotlight. Sure, the odd duet is fine, but more than that you become a group and then no one gets to shine the brightest. None of us want to be anyone else's back-up singer either. So the best thing to do is meet up for the occasional jam and otherwise leave each other alone. By the way, if you think I was just talking about singing, you haven't been paying attention.

While some of us are happy to just stay out of each other's way, a few take it a lot further. They have been known to even leave the cities and seek a more rural life. A lot of tales of mysterious voices on the moors or the like can be attributed to our less sociable sisters. While few of these extreme Soloists make many friends, I'm told the Gangrel hold them in high esteem, and many have even joined some quite wild gangs of traveling Kindred, even though they rarely stay in even such small company for long.

Sisters of the Fugue

We all hear the Fugue, the music that we carry with us. Many of us find it a distraction and try to tune it out, while most of us find a way to live with it and follow its flow. But some of us actually work to listen to it very closely. If it is truly the tune of humanity's heart, they believe that understanding it might lead to incredible insight and power. Where it will lead them is hard to tell, as the sisters rarely share their secrets. Actually, it is rare for you to be able to even get their attention. Every spare moment they have is spent in meditation, listening to the melody in their mind and trying to commune with it.

It's hard to know if they have learnt much, but several new abilities are rumored to have been developed amongst them. Some say they can hear voices under the music, and these voices offer hints of the future or the past. Some tell secrets, and others warn of danger. It may be true, but I've always been told that hearing voices is the first sign of madness. The second sign is listening for them. It's no coincidence that more than a few Banshees have come from the ranks of the Sisters.

The Quiet Celebrities

We all want to sing, but not all of us want to be famous. Fame is a double-edged sword for the kine, but it can be downright dangerous for Kindred. Our lack of aging is also a problem if we finally hit the big time. Sure, Cliff Richard and Madonna might have an uncanny ability to maintain their youth, but sooner or later your eternal beauty gives the game away. So you might think you have eternity to work your way towards singing at Carnegie Hall or Wembley Stadium, but once you do, it is quickly time to retire. For most of us that seems like a waste of talent, especially when (even if I'm being modest) only the most incredibly talented singers are ever Embraced by us.

So, some of us have formed a society to help deal with this problem. They control recording labels, venues, and production companies so they might employ any of us "for one night

only." They also specialize in media manipulation and have the contacts to create whole new identities. So when you get too famous, they can create a new persona for you and make sure you don't have to start your career from the bottom again.

The Quiet Celebrities often don't have time to do much singing themselves, but they are extremely well connected across several industries. They also form a very useful bridge between the Toreador and the Ventrue, able to converse about both music and finance in equal measure. Given their control over multiple major performance spaces, more than a few Toreador owe them favors as well.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Nightclub Owner

You haven't retired; you just stepped out of the limelight. Some say you are past your prime, but you always prove them wrong on the few nights you have time to take the stage yourself. Your regulars wait for those nights like no other. Those who hear you sing wonder why you do it so rarely. But you prefer to make those few nights special, and leave the stage for others to claim in between.

As a manager, you are constantly on the look out for new talent, and perhaps one might be trained in more ways than just how to use her voice. You have also made contacts among the Ventrue as a businesswoman, and within the Toreador, who occasionally come to visit in the hopes of hearing you once more.

Confidence Trickster

You have an amazing voice, but singing isn't really your thing. You have a different melody and use it to sway those around you with honeyed words. There is always music when you speak, sweet and strong, enough to make people do you favors. You are always looking to play the angle, always have some action going on. With a voice like yours, people just seem to trust you, and that's all you need.

Disciplines aren't as much your thing as people skills and quick thinking. The other Daughters look down on you for using your skills like this, but screw those stuck up

bitches. You've made plenty of friends among the Ravnos, and even taught them a trick or two.

Speechmaker

You might not sing but you love to perform. Even before you realized you were a woman, your voice carried, be it in a debate chamber or on the streets in front of a union meeting. Now that you've been accepted as a true Daughter of Cacophony, you love to gather a crowd, and when you have one, they belong to you. There are very few causes you really care about yourself. The cause doesn't matter as much as the fact you can make a crowd do anything. They are the sheep and you are the shepherd.

Your services are for hire. It doesn't matter what you convince the crowd to do, just that they are yours to command. You've made a lot of friends among the Brujah, who like to use you to bring their labor force back in line once more. Who knows, maybe the Prince will ask you to help bring some of the other Kindred back in line too one day.

Merits and Flaws

Chorus Trained (3 or 5pt. Merit)

The character has learned how to use the Fugue to tune in to her sisters and work together with far more efficiency. For 3 points, this Merit grants the character 2 extra dice to any Melpominee dice pool when using the power with another character with this Merit. For 5 points, the bonus 2 dice can be added for any action being performed by a partner with this Merit, such as making art or even fighting together.

Fugue Instinct (3pt. Merit)

You can hear warnings and gain insight by listening to the Fugue more deeply. You must forego one of your actions to listen properly to the Fugue within. During this time, you may defend yourself but take no active actions. If you do, then you gain an insight for your next action that grants you +2 dice to whatever dice pool you use.

Banshee-in-Waiting (5pt. Flaw)

The Fugue is gradually driving you towards madness. If your temporary Willpower ever reaches 0, you automatically gain a derangement which can never be removed. You may remove other derangements you gain in other ways as usual. You may gain a maximum of three of these permanent derangements from losing your Willpower before being consumed by it. Should it happen a fourth time, you immediately lose yourself to the Fugue and become a character under the control of the Storyteller, walking in whatever direction the music takes you and killing anything you come across.

Combination Powers

Celebrity (Obfuscate ••• and Presence ••)

A lower-powered version of Majesty, this power allows the Kindred to claim some celebrity glamour. Those around her come to believe she is some sort of famous media personality. While they can't quite place her, they become sure they have seen her on television or on an advertising billboard. It allows the Kindred to get preferential treatment, media attention, and access to VIP areas and exclusive places.

System: To activate this power the Kindred makes an Appearance + Presence roll, difficulty 8. For each success, she can add an extra die to her pool for any social interactions where fame is an advantage. This might be for convincing a doorman to let her into a club, or inspiring a group of people to ask for her autograph. Essentially, it allows the Kindred to gain all the benefits of the Fame background, with the ability to turn it off. The effects of this power last for a scene.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Silent Voice (Melpominee ••• and Obfuscate •••)

By pitching her voice impossibly high, the Daughter of Cacophony can use her powers inaudibly. This means that powers that rely on the voice to cause harm can be done in silence.

System: In most cases this power works whenever the user wants it to with no roll. However, as it involves sound outside even most supernatural ranges, those with Auspex are allowed a test to try and detect it (Perception + Awareness + Auspex, difficulty 8). Unfortunately, those who do so risk hurting their ears, and take 1 non-lethal wound level for every 2 successes they get on their roll.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Tune Out (Auspex •• and Melpominee ••)

With this power the Kindred can dull their senses enough to avoid the effects of any sonic attacks or distractions. She simply picks what she wants to hear, such as conversation, and ignores loud alarms or white noise.

System: This power works at the will of the power user. She can tune out background noise to hear conversations without any penalties, or eliminate painfully loud alarms. However, when the power is activated the user cannot hear anything except for the sounds she has decided to hear. This might mean she can only hear the conversation she is having in a loud club, but not the music or background voices. Unfortunately, as she has to specify what she can hear, she will be unable to adjust the power to hear any new

sounds unless she knows they are there. So she can easily add a new voice to a conversation when she sees someone join, but not hear someone talking behind her or hear a new alarm going off.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Elder Disciplines

Mosh Pit (Melpominee •••••)

This rather dangerous power can be used to inspire frenzy in any supernatural creature prone to such a thing (such as vampires and werewolves). The Daughter sings of her primal anger, and her target finds it hard not to lose themselves to their most violent urges.

System: The Daughter spends a blood point and makes a Manipulation + Performance roll at a difficulty of her choosing. If she is successful, her target must make a roll to resist frenzy at the same difficulty. If a frenzy is inspired, it plays out as normal. The Daughter has no control over the target beyond triggering the frenzy. Other Melpominee powers might allow the Daughter to effect multiple targets.

Primal Scream (Melpominee •••••)

This time the Daughter's song is one of terror, not rage. It is awe inspiring and makes her appear frightening in the extreme. Her target becomes terrified beyond belief.

System: This power works in exactly the same ways as Mosh Pit (Melpominee • • • • •), except that instead of frenzy, it inspires Rötschreck.

Haunting Melody (Melpominee ••••• ••)

The Daughter can use this power to leave a tune hanging in the air in a certain place. Anyone visiting this area can perceive the tune quietly on the breeze, or just on the edge of their hearing. Unfortunately, the tune carries madness, and those who hear it can lose their minds if they are not careful.

System: The Daughter picks a derangement and makes a Manipulation + Performance roll at a difficulty of her choosing. For each success she gets, the song she sings will remain quietly hanging in the area for one day. Anyone entering the area must make a Willpower roll at a difficulty equal to the one the Daughter picked to use the power. If they fail, they suffer the effects of the derangement the Daughter picked for the rest of the night. If they botch the roll, the derangement does not fade and must be removed as if it was permanent.

Calling Song (Melpominee ••••• •••)

This ability allows the Daughter to place a tune in the mind of several different targets. They begin to hear her Fugue all around them, quietly at first, and then growing more difficult to ignore. They will hear the tune in myriad places, even in the walls of buildings, and it will seem to come from somewhere in particular. Eventually they will find themselves drawn towards the source of the music.

System: The Daughter can implant the song in as many people as she likes. She must sing for each person individually, making a Charisma + Performance roll at a difficulty equal to their current Willpower. When she has implanted the song, she can choose to activate it at any time. When she does, she must sing the calling song once more at the place she wants the others to come to. From that moment on, each person with the song in their head must do their best to reach the place they are being called to as if they were under the effects of Summon (Presence • • • •). Supernatural creatures may make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to resist this effect, but ordinary humans may not. What they find there depends on the Daughter's plan, but she need not be there at all. Once each targeted person arrives, the call of the song fades and they know they have reached its source. If the target manages to make a successful Willpower roll, they continue to hear the song and are still drawn towards it, but they may choose not to go. At the next sunset, they must make the Willpower roll again, and if they fail the song takes control of them once more. If they manage to succeed the Willpower roll three times in a row, the song loses its power and fades away.

MARK
KELLY
16

GARGOYLES

"A slave is one who waits for someone to free him."

— Ezra Pound

To Serve and Protect

I am unmoved as my Master brings the Lamb into his sanctuary. The air is thick with transgression. No mortal is ever allowed this deep into the Chantry. The Lamb stares into my face and brushes my cheek with a soft, warm hand. I am strange statuary to the poor girl. My master affords me a nervous glance before she softly beckons the Lamb to turn. My Master speaks the Words of the Ventrue and the Lamb soon falls into her arms, dreaming. She looks at me again as she lays the Lamb on the couch. I am to bring her the Book.

On these nights, when the moon hides itself in shame, dark sorceries emerge from the shadows. The children of the dark places wrote rituals in these terrible pages, and gave the Book to my Master as a curiosity. I can feel the strange texture of the binding through my thick hands. Everything inside the Book is wrong. I wish I could carry it out of this place, fly as high as my wings could carry me and throw it as far away as possible. But I know my place. I bring the Book from its hiding place and offer it to my Master on bended knee. My Master eagerly scoops it out of my hands and commands me to bind the Lamb in preparation. I obey, though I cannot bring myself to look at my Master or the Lamb.

My Master slaughtered Lambs on every night the moon hides its face. Four before this Lamb, two more after. Before she read the Book, we would speak about our years together and the world outside the Chantry. Now, she only speaks about the power she'll receive in return. I know my Master believes the lies. When I tried to tell her the first time, she commanded me to silence. When I tried to stop her the third time, my blood burned with the bond she held over me. I watched the Knife cut delicately, fatally into the Lambs. I saw the blood turn black as she drank it from symbols carved in each of the Lambs. I heard the whispers telling her to do it again, growing louder each time.

When she takes the Knife out from its secret place, my blood boils again. But this time, I find myself in motion. Not towards my Master, or the Lamb, but the chair my Master would

stand upon to dust and polish me. The sound of the splintering finally draws her attention away from the Book. My Master whirls in time for the jagged leg to sink deep into her chest. The look on her face wounds me deeply. It reminds me of what she looked like when I climbed out of my birth sac to see her weeping face. She slumps to the floor and I scoop the Lamb up in my arms. I quickly exit through the window into the night air. I fly toward Elysium where the Lamb should be safe for the evening. The noise will draw the others. They will find the Book and the Knife. My Master will blame me and I will be hunted by anyone who believes her.

I swore to protect my Master, her House and her Clan. Even if I must cast myself out to protect my Master from herself.

A History of Chains and Flight

Many bloodlines have their origins hidden in the fog of legend and the mists of time. We are fortunate in that our history traces back to a distinct place and time. We can take solace in that we know where we came from and what we were meant to do. But we can also point to the moment when we found our freedom, so we know we are able to exert our wills and do what we feel is necessary. Despite our monstrous appearances and the piteous attitudes of other Kindred toward us, we should take pride that we have two moments in history that we can grip tightly. We were born in chains and, more importantly, were set free to fly. The Gargoyles all owe our existence to the Tremere. But we do not belong to them.

The Tremere of the 12th Century were bold, brash creatures that little resembled the secretive schemers we know today. They were foolhardy enough to jump into the Jyhad and pull one of the Antediluvians from his seat at the table. They could have stayed a bloodline known for its study of blood magic, but they wanted more. By becoming a Clan, they made themselves targets of the other Cainites of the day. Their usurpation may have also triggered the tumults that created The Camarilla, so they needed as many allies as possible. When they couldn't find many amongst the Kindred, they did the next best thing. They made them. They made us.

The Mother of Gargoyles

Our bloodline was founded by a Tremere mage named Virstania. She, too, was Embraced with a purpose. Her mastery of summoning familiars and creating servants brought her to the attention of the Tremere elders. Many Kindred were brought to Ceoris, the original Chantry of the Tremere, to be studied, especially those known for malleable blood. That these Kindred were also some of the Tremere's most vicious enemies at the time was certainly not a coincidence. Dozens of Kindred were destroyed by her efforts, but eventually they began to bear a macabre fruit. The secret was combining different types of vitae with certain ingredients that provoked a violent, magical reaction.

Virstania created the ritual that made our bloodline. We know it today as At Our Command It Breathes. The ritual requires several dead bodies and specially prepared materials. I hesitate to go into too much detail, but it involves stitching the bodies together, immersing them in an alchemical solution for a few months, and performing incantations until the Gargoyle burst forth. Perhaps her most unusual breakthrough was our ability to fly. She took our name from the creatures guarding churches at the time, so she decided to give us the ability to mimic their flight. All of us have the capacity. It's as obvious to us as walking.

She cared for these first clutches as if they were her own children. Some would say she got too close to her creations. Virstania, inspired by the Anarch Revolt of the 15th century, sided with the Gargoyles when they decided to throw off the shackles of their oppressive masters. Many Gargoyles given to other chantries were tortured, beaten, and starved to break their spirits. A few who had discovered the Embrace were put to the torch for violating The Traditions. This may be why she's rarely mentioned in the company of historic Tremere. She protected and fought for us, forsaking her loyalty to the chantry. We revere her for this stance. The Tremere looking to retain our services are wise to invoke her name when speaking to us.

Virstania Protects Her Children

After sharing the ritual with her Clanmates, she was appalled at the cruelty shown to us by our new masters. She viewed us as her Childer, yet the Tremere used us as beasts of burden, cannon fodder, or hardier subjects for thaumaturgical experiments forbidden to this day. The incident that drove her to decide to free us from our servitude is lost to history, but I've heard stories that say that after witnessing a scene of such brutality she locked her study door for anywhere from months to years before emerging with the resolve to set us free.

She gathered her forces to strike an unlikely target: Ceoris in Transylvania. It was rumored to be the location where the original transformation of the Council of Seven took place, going from wizards to vampires. The Tremere likely thought it was another attack by the Tzimisce war ghouls. All were surprised when the Gargoyles serving on the inside of the building did nothing to stop the attack. In fact, they opened the doors to their brothers and sisters, who soon outnumbered the Tremere inside. Virstania leveraged the situation to create our status as a bloodline. Soon after, thanks to this event and the aftershocks of the Anarch Revolt, the Council of Seven relocated to a more secure location in Vienna. They remain there today because of us.

The bulk of hostilities ended in 1489. The Tremere signed the Montmartre Pact and formally joined the Camarilla. As part of the deal, they swore to stop creating Gargoyles and cease hunting down vampires for use in the ritual. The Clan was also supposed to destroy all copies of that ritual. Of course, copies still exist today, but the Gangrel and Nosferatu have long memories. Any chantries discovered creating Gargoyles these days must not only deal with those Clans seeking a little payback, but internal Tremere inquisitors looking to make an example of anyone working against the pacts made by the Council of Seven.

Unlike most things about our creation, the origin of our unique gifts is still something of a mystery. Some claim that the discipline was Virstania's final gift to us before she slipped into a torpor from which she would only awaken in a time of need. Others believe the independent development of the discipline was what caused her to stand up for us as Kindred and push back against our horrible treatment. Now, nearly all Gargoyles possess it, passing it through blood for hundreds of years. It brings together all the little pieces of our bloodline into one place. A non-Gargoyle who possesses the discipline was usually taught the ability because of a great service they provided to the bloodline. Whatever Gargoyle taught the outsider the discipline holds that Kindred in the same regard as they do our mother.

One of the first major splits between the Gargoyles exploring their freedom and the ones content to stay in the shadow of the Tremere came during the migration of Kindred to the Americas. The Victorian era, in particular, highlighted the changing world for many of us. The free Gargoyles migrated to the Americas in small trickles here and there, but this was an age of expansion of the Camarilla. When Tremere decided to strike out for the New World, sometimes they took their Gargoyles to assist in rebuilding new havens and chantries. However, many ended up freed in Europe, abandoned by their masters. These Gargoyles were left to their own devices and didn't last long out in the cold, cruel world of Kindred politics. It was like forcing a beloved pet out into the wilderness and expecting it to survive. A last bit of cruelty for a life submerged in it.

London became something of a gathering point for the bloodline. Most cities are lucky to have one Gargoyle in its secret history. London's been home to multiple Gargoyles, including a notable gang of what I might now call Anarchs. The London of the early 20th century was home to the Sixpence Pinch. This all-Gargoyle coterie was led by a Kindred named Rooker. This gang proved to be a thorn in the side of the Camarilla, pushing against the Ventrue's attempts to consolidate power. The only known surviving member of the gang, Handsome Dan, fled to the Anarch Free State a few years ago when mix of Tremere and Ventrue Kindred killed the other five members of the gang.

These days, we don't spend a lot of time worrying about categorizing ourselves. Whether we were born via Embrace or ritual, we are rare enough that when we do come together, we spend little time discussing our origins. To the outsider, however, knowing why we were made and how our old masters classified us can give a little insight to our outlook and the roles we serve in modern society.

Born of Estranged Blood

Virstania first found success with Gangrel vitae. Their mastery of the protean forms allowed them to do many things other Kindred could not, like turn to mist and take different animal shapes. Their solitary nature also made them excellent targets for Tremere hunting parties. If a Gangrel disappeared from the outskirts of a domain, few Kindred noticed or cared enough to investigate where they went. Even then, the Tremere had to hunt carefully. Losing two or three of their own to capture a lone Kindred was a poor trade, even for the desperate Tremere. The captured Gangrel were usually ones that somehow made it back to a solitary haven wounded in a larger battle.

The Scout Gargoyles descended from these creations. They were created to allow quick, quiet transport of information between Chantries as well as reports of enemy movements. The Scouts were one of the reasons the Tremere were able to stave off many assaults from Cainites upset with their sudden ascension as a Clan. What was often ascribed to mysterious thaumaturgy or some gift for seeing the future was instead well-timed communication and coordination using Scout Gargoyles to carry information between their outposts. They were the Gargoyles that first mastered flight.

Our creation was clearly inspired by the war ghouls of the Tzimisce. The Vozhd did their part to crush many nascent chantries to keep the secrets of blood magic to themselves. Virstania took inspiration and blood from the voivodes that fell during the Long Night. The need to sleep surrounded by earth fascinated the Tremere. The addition of grave dirt to the alchemical process of our creation likely came from these experiments. Gargoyles carry the earth with them as part of their stony skin. They don't just sleep in a reminder of what they once were; they live in one.

Gargoyles of this type are commonly known as Warriors. These soldiers fight on the front lines, focusing their development of their inhuman strength as a way to smash the armies of those who would oppose the Tremere. Beyond their strength, the Warrior also developed the most brutal, fearful looks of all the Gargoyles. They were built to win battles through fear, intimidation, and physical punishment. They might lack the terrible beauty of the handmade creations of the Tzimisce, but their brutal efficiency kept the Tremere from falling during its first decades in existence.

The final Clan that contributed much to our bloodline were the Nosferatu. These poor wretches were often unable or unwilling to fight, dropped into the alchemical mix because they stumbled upon a secret that the Tremere didn't want getting out. For many years, the secret was the Gargoyle process itself. Nosferatu who discovered how we were made often ended up chopped up in the vat for the next batch. The Tremere tried to pass off Gargoyle sightings as machinations of the Nosferatu for many years. It kept the Gargoyles secret longer and, in some cases, got Clans to target somebody else instead of the Usurpers for a while.

The Gargoyles that drew heavily from this blood are called Sentinels. They turned the strength of their Nosferatu forbearers into their own resilience, which made them excellent choices to protect havens and chantries. We were given menial tasks to keep things clean and functioning around the building. These Gargoyles tend to embody the strong, silent type. Some do so out of a lack of wit. Others develop a sense of politeness and manner befitting a butler.

The services of these Gargoyles were often the source of rivalries between chantries. Debts were settled by sending a Sentinel to make sure an up-and-coming haven was built around a sense of order. Older coteries also benefited from a Sentinel helping when lost members meant hidden books and forgotten lore.

Overlooking the City at Midnight

In the modern nights, Gargoyles are born both through the original ritual and the more common Embrace. Those created through the ritual are usually Kindred with a connection to the original bloodlines needed for the ritual. Those given the Embrace are mortals chosen in whatever manner Kindred choose their Childer. Perhaps it is for the best that many of us prefer lives of solitude or quiet service to other Kindred.

Gargoyles face a unique challenge in watching over their neonates: flight. Because all Gargoyles have some knowledge of flight, learning how to fly requires a particular type of training. Flying is not a part of the human experience, so Gargoyles often mark off a large space in the city as their training ground. It may be a small airport on the edge of town or an abandoned building with a very tall roof. Crashes, loud noises, and other violations of the Masquerade are expected, so the Gargoyles will often seek out this sanctuary in exchange for services rendered to the Prince or his council. Those same reasons are why the Gargoyle rarely makes his haven near here.

Let me take a moment to discuss our wings. We all have them and they are functional to a degree. They walk the line between being necessary for the use of flight and being ornamental. They act as something of a focus for us to fly. Damage to them can affect our ability to fly in the same way that blinding a Kindred can affect their use of their powers. The flight is mystic in nature, but damaged wings can cause a Gargoyle to be grounded simply from the psychological impact. We need them to fly, but they don't work like bird wings, bat wings, or any wings known to a naturalist.

Gargoyles created through ritual or Embrace share a common weakness. Transforming into a Gargoyle wipes away many of the memories of our humanity. When confronted with elements of our human lives, we might feel a twinge of recognition or a sense of deja vu, but we rarely recover a solid memory. Ever spend days trying to

remember a particular song? That's what it is like for me to picture my father's face.

And what of those times when the ritual returns? Though its use was banned centuries ago and the Tremere claim all copies were destroyed, sometimes evidence is found of the materials required to create us outside the Embrace. Sometimes it is a desperate ploy to gain power for the Tremere in the city by making us, especially in cities where history does not run deep and few know about what transpired in the Long Night. Other cities exist where the Tremere believe their clutch of power is so great, such a violation would likely go unpunished. This is hardly the case. Kindred don't need much justification to go to war. A Primogen council may not give us a chance to speak, but suggest the Tremere are up to their old tricks to another Clan and it won't take long for the truth to be revealed. In fire, if necessary.

Supping With Our Overseers

Our relationship with the Clan that created us is complex, to say the least. We have been free for hundreds of years, but many of us stay in service to the Tremere out of tradition, fear, or perhaps even lack of a further sense of purpose. There were many examples of the Tremere mistreating us during our enslavement, but there were also many who treated us with kindness. Cruel masters don't just exist in the Tremere, and some of us prefer to stay with the devil we know. Though there is some lingering resentment, there is also fondness. Don't assume that a free Gargoyle will automatically rail against the Tremere.

Today, having a Gargoyle servant in your haven or Chantry is considered a prestigious luxury. It's a sign that you have power, longevity, or a little bit of both. It's not unheard of for a Tremere to woo a Gargoyle that arrives in the domain for some exclusive services. Our strange forms can be an impressive display when a Tremere is seeking a Primogen seat or to oust the head of the local chantry. Other Kindred will woo us when they are trying to get the Tremere in a city to do what they want. They assume we still have some leverage with the Clan. Even if we don't, entertaining their offers is often worth your time. Even if nothing comes of it, it can offer insight into the politics of the city and a good indication if it's a place you can thrive or one you should avoid.

One advantage of continuing to serve the Tremere is access to their magic. When we were merely their creation, their thaumaturgy was kept away from us like all other Kindred. Now that we have something the Tremere want, learning a few rituals here or there in exchange for some protection can be quite useful. Because of our complicated connection, some Tremere consider us to be closer than a rival Clan, even if we aren't fully of the blood. Beware those Tremere who still exist from the time of our creation, though, because old opinions die hard. They might decide you're not worth the trouble and simply hunt you down.

Chantries unconcerned with the Montmartre Pact have occasionally created "Gaslight Gargoyles." Because the Embrace removes many of the memories we had as humans, these Gargoyles are convinced they were created before the Pact came into play, and still treated as slaves created through the ritual. Reinforcement through blood bond and powers causes the Gargoyle to doubt any evidence to the contrary. It's a big risk, because if the process backfires, it's usually the type that burns chanties to the ground and leaves few members with their heads still attached to their bodies. The only documented case where this occurred was in Milwaukee in the 1960s, but the concern arises every decade or so in our circles.

Few, if any, Tremere antitribu have contact with us. Many of the Tremere that left did so because of the Monmartre Pact, taking with them their stone slaves if they were able. Many of these Kindred left their havens, grimoires, and other equipment behind because of the violent backlash of the parent Clan. The Gargoyles who do side with the Sabbat spend no more time with the Tremere antitribu than the other members of the Sect. The one exception is the makeup of the Downward Chain Cabal, which features the Gargoyle Mathilda as one of Hannibal Rex's so-called "infernal apprentices."

The Houses We Watch Over

The free Gargoyles recognize they don't exist in a vacuum. Most of us try to keep our allegiances private, but there are those who decide for one reason or another to throw in with a larger Sect. Paying some allegiance can offer more freedom in the long run. If the city is full of Camarilla vampires, saying you are one will mean most of them will leave you alone and let you go about your business.

If you count the Gargoyles who still serve the Tremere, most of the Gargoyles who do choose loyalty to a Sect choose the Camarilla. They don't ask much of their followers, though our appearance challenges their Masquerade. Take a page from the Nosferatu and stay hidden in their cities to avoid getting into any major hassles. Many of us would likely throw in fully with the Camarilla should the Final Nights ever descend upon us.

Service to the Sabbat is rare. We spent a lot of time and effort throwing off the shackles of one group of vampires

using mystical blood rites to enforce loyalty. Still, some spirits desire war and vengeance more than autonomy, and you'll find plenty of that with the Sabbat. These Gargoyles will tell you they are sick of hiding and brooding. They want to do what they were made to do; destroy enemies. Whether out of mercenary loyalty or anarchistic love of destruction, these Gargoyles are a terrifying sight.

Often, because we rarely declare our allegiances loudly, we're lumped in with the Anarchs. They do make fine companions, since they are usually accepting of both our obvious appearance and our desire to not be tied down to one location. A few of us do believe in the cause, especially those who want the Tremere to pay for the crimes they committed during our creation. Friction occurs when they assume we're interested in all their causes, which rarely happens.

While Sects are a way of life for many Kindred, we rarely feel an urge to join. We fought for our freedom centuries ago. Joining a Sect can feel like trading one set of chains for another.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Impeccable Majordomo

You may look like a monster, but you pride yourself on your politeness and efficiency. You are trusted to run a holding all on your own, be it a chantry or perhaps a haven held by a coterie of Kindred. Newcomers put off by your fearsome looks are won over by your dry wit, your excellent taste in clothing, and your ability to quote the classics. Your calm demeanor can deceive some into thinking you're a pushover, which is a fatal mistake. You'll play the brute when necessary, though you'll feel terrible about it the next evening. You'd much prefer a good book or a game of chess to the vicious politics of vampires.

The Thing in the Basement

They keep you in chains so that when you are unchained, you run hard and fast at wherever they point. They keep you hungry because they want you to tear apart whatever needs to be killed. They keep you out of sight of other Kindred, so the frightened tales they tell make you seem bigger and scarier when you are seen. You are a blunt, brutal solution to your master's problems. You enjoy solving them, for the most part, as long as you don't have to clean up the mess afterwards. You may be a dog on a leash, but that doesn't mean you don't enjoy the steaks that get tossed your way.

Abolitionist

The mere thought of how many of your brothers and sisters still willingly call themselves slaves drives you to the edge of frenzy. It's been six hundred years after the Gargoyle Revolt, and so many still willingly live in the houses of those Tremere bastards. If they won't free themselves, you must take up arms and protect your brothers and sisters by striking down the slave masters and breaking the chains. They'll thank you when they are free. You've developed a reputation as a troublemaker in most cities, but you know that every city has need for someone that shakes up the status quo. You're willing to ally yourself with anyone so long as they agree to assist your cause.

Combination Disciplines

The Shoulders of Atlas (Flight ••, Potence ••)

The power of flight is one of the reasons the Gargoyles have existed for so long. Usually, they can only carry a limited amount of cargo based on their mastery of Flight. This combination allows them to apply some of their superhuman strength to carry bigger amounts at lower levels of Flight.

System: This combination allows dots of Potence to count as dots of Flight when determining a Gargoyle's carrying capacity (V20, p. 448). For example, if Jurgen the Gargoyle has Flight 2, Potence 2, and this ability, Jurgen can take off with 50 pounds/25 kgs of load but carry up to 100 pounds/45 kgs while flying. Speed is still limited by the mastery of Flight.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Falconer's Dive (Flight •, Visceratika ••••)

Gargoyles swoop down on their enemies like few other Kindred can. "Death from above" is a common tactic of these vampires, but a select few can streamline their diving forms for minimum wind resistance and maximum impact on a target.

System: The Kindred spends a point of Willpower to subtly make their body more aerodynamic as they fall. Using this ability requires room to maneuver high in the air or a great height to drop from, like the edge of a skyscraper. The Kindred makes a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) as an action. For each success rolled, they subtract 1 from the difficulty of their next Brawl or Melee roll on a target below them (minimum difficulty of 3). The Kindred must make the roll as their next action or they lose the bonus. Using it

indoors is unlikely unless the space is massive, like an aircraft hangar or massive cave.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

Carry The Mountain's Burden (Visceratika ••••, Fortitude •••)

Gargoyles who master the Armor of Terra (V20, p. 476) can make themselves even tougher by using it in conjunction with their Fortitude. These Disciplines work together to make the Gargoyle into an unstoppable brute that requires a miracle to take down. For obvious reasons, this is a favorite choice of Sentinel Gargoyles.

System: The Gargoyle spends a point of Willpower to enhance their Armor of Terra strategically with the supernatural toughness of Fortitude. All bonuses and penalties for the Armor of Terra double for the remainder of the combat scene. The Gargoyle receives two extra soak dice for aggravated and lethal soak dice pools. It also gains four dice to soak bashing wounds, ignores two levels of wound penalties, and reduces any fire-based damage pools to a quarter (round down) of their original size. All touch-based Perception-rolled have a difficulty of +4 (maximum of 9) because the Gargoyle's skin becomes even tougher.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

I Am The Keystone (Fortitude ••, Potence ••, Visceratika •••)

Visceratika is known for Masquerade-shredding displays of toughness and strength. Masters of the Discipline can invoke changes to their body that are a bit subtler but no less devastating when unleashed at the right time.

System: The Kindred spends a point of Willpower. Upon doing so, she may temporarily redistribute points between her Fortitude and Potence Disciplines up to the maximum allowed by her Generation. The Disciplines stay redistributed until the Kindred is Incapacitated or the next sunrise, whichever comes first. They may spend another point of Willpower to change the dots back or adjust them to new totals.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

Gargoyles Variations

Many Gargoyles are unique, but some are more distinct than the "typical" Gargoyle. These variations are colloquially called Scouts, Sentinels, and Warriors. The split between them — particularly older Gargoyles that are hundreds of years old — can be quite pronounced, depending on what "stock" was used and how the creator refined the ritual used. For characters reflecting these deeper variations, use the following in-Clan Disciplines and Clan weakness instead of the ones listed in V20. Visceratika is considered out of clan for Gargoyles from these variants. All Gargoyles remain susceptible to mind control from any source. A Gargoyle's Willpower score (current or permanent) is considered two points lower when used to resist such powers.

Scout Gargoyles

These Gargoyles were created to explore and report back to Tremere about their surroundings. They were designed to turn to stone if heavily damaged so that the Tremere or other Scouts could retrieve them later to claim any information they were unable to report back.

Disciplines: Auspex, Obfuscate, Flight

Weakness: All Health penalties from injures double as the Gargoyle's damaged body turns back to stone. These penalties only go away when the Gargoyle awakens in an evening with no health boxes crossed off.

Sentinel Gargoyles

These Gargoyles were created to watch over the chantries, havens, and other important locations of the early Tremere. They are quite sociable and friendly, despite appearances to the contrary.

Disciplines: Flight, Potence, Fortitude

Weakness: If a Sentinel Gargoyle finds itself truly alone without someone to call master, mate, ally or friend, all dice pools are halved until the Gargoyle can find someone to trust and serve in the world.

Warrior Gargoyles

These Gargoyles were built to wage war on the enemies of House and Clan Tremere. The Tremere did not want to waste their small number on fighting their battles, so they created these stone soldiers instead.

Disciplines: Flight, Fortitude, Protean

Weakness: Whenever a Warrior Gargoyle frenzies, a part of their body turns to stone. Choose a body part and an Attribute that reflects the part (such as eyes for Perception or legs for Dexterity). Until the next sunrise, any rolls requiring the attribute are considered an automatic failure. The next evening, the body part returns to normal.

Merits and Flaws

Stillness of Death (2pt. Merit)

Gargoyles often hide themselves as statuary. The difficulty for any searches to find you are increased by 2 when you stay perfectly still.

Heavy Hands (3pt. Merit)

One of the effects of becoming a vampire is strange changes happening to your body. The obvious alterations to your hands have made them tougher, harder, and more impervious to pain. All difficulties for damage rolls using unarmed attacks go down by 1.

Stone Tongue (3pt. Flaw)

The transformation of the Embrace didn't just affect your appearance. It made it physically difficult for you to speak properly and clearly. It may be because of a clumsy tongue, some nasty looking tusks, or a raptor-type beak. No matter the cause, you suffer a +2 difficulty to any Social rolls requiring you to speak.

Blood Weakness (4 or 7pt. Flaw)

The bloodline began as an experiment in manufacturing a Kindred from diverse bloodlines. They perfected the alchemical process, but somewhere along the way, a weakness in an ancestor caught hold. It manifested in your Embrace. In addition to the weaknesses you possess, you also possess either the Gangrel (V20, p. 55) or the Tzimisce weakness (V20, p. 71). For four points, choose one of the two weaknesses. For seven points, you possess both. Warrior Gargoyles with the Gangrel weakness version of Blood Weakness may gain both animal features and stone features from one frenzy.

Additionally, choose one of the four Disciplines available to the Gargoyles. For you, this Discipline is considered out of Clan and costs the higher amount of experience points to advance.

Gargoyle Rituals

Some Tremere creators have discovered that if they use the Enchant Talisman ritual on a Gargoyle (V20, p. 239), additional rituals can be cast on the Gargoyle for a permanent effect. This requires casting the ritual for six hours a night, for one week per level of the ritual to be applied, but otherwise enchanting a Gargoyle uses the same rules as Enchant Talisman.

Rituals activated by a Gargoyle require no roll to cast, and last a scene or until dismissed. A Gargoyle enchanted in this matter can spend its own blood or Willpower as if it were the caster of the ritual enchanted into its blood. If no cost is normally required for the ritual, however, the Gargoyle must still spend at least one blood to activate it. If the ritual requires a specific item, the Gargoyle herself is considered to be the "item" for purposes of the ritual.

Many of these so-called "Gargoyle rituals" were lost hundreds of years ago, but some modern rituals may or may not be compatible with Enchant Talisman at the Storyteller's discretion. However, Gargoyles can learn enchantments from other Gargoyles (by paying experience points equal to the cost of an out-of-Clan Discipline times the level of the ritual). At least one ritual is known to have survived, but there may be more.

Ward of the Winged Sepulcher (Level 3 Gargoyle Ritual)

The Gargoyle (or its master) can prepare the creature to provide temporary shelter from the damning rays of the sun. When the rays of the sun strike the caster's skin, wings billow out and dramatically wrap around itself and anyone in the creature's grasp. Both the caster and its charge are protected from taking sunlight damage until the sun sets the next evening.

System: The caster must prepare a small cube, half an inch in diameter, carefully cut from a tombstone marking an empty grave in a graveyard. Spending a blood point, he dabs each side of the cube with a drop of blood, whispering an incantation. The caster ingests the cube and the ritual lies dormant until the creature's skin is touched by sunlight, at which point wings unfurl to protect the caster. The wing hardens to a stone-like substance and it is able to protect one person inside its space. If the caster does not already possess wings, the ward does one level of aggravated damage if only protecting the caster, two if protecting the caster and one other subject.

MARK
KELLY
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Harbingers of Skulls

"What's one more meaningless act of violence on that zoo of a planet? It would be appropriate. When in Rome; burn it."
– Iain M. Banks, *The State of the Art*

Masks that Grin and Lie

"Will you be visiting our necromancer friends?" Jacopo's fingers trailed in dark waters as the gondola cut its way through the Grand Canal, his silent servant acting as gondolier. Gian was keeping a steady eye on the masked figure sitting at the prow, while Jacopo pointedly looked distracted by the filthy canal. His preference was to look away.

A creak and a pop from the Harbinger's bones signaled her reaction to Jacopo's words, but it was some minutes before she spoke. The gondola was coasting alongside the Fondaco dei Turchi when whispered Latin emanated from within the death mask. "My focus is not the Familia Giovanni, but I forgive your natural assumption. Quite aside from the renewal of our relations, cousin of Typhon, I am here to make a purchase."

Jacopo looked up from the forbidding, swirling depths to see the Marchesa Liliana leaning forward, head cocked slightly to one side. The only expression he could read was from her eyes, the color of concrete, harsh and intense. "The kine and the neonates of my Clan prefer the commerce of Milan to that of Venice, but I can acquire anything you might need. You will likely desire more modern, fashionable clothing, if you intend to ingratiate yourself with the local Kindred."

Her voice, though low, was somehow discernible over the sound of laughing and cheering revelers on the canal bank. The Carnival was in full swing. "Cainite. Kindred. What word will they use next to describe the monster?" Liliana slowly removed her mask, exposing a tangled trail of fleshy tissue threads imitating a rotten approximation of a face. Her eyeballs bulged from her skull, ovoid and fixed.

Her Setite companion chewed the inside of his mouth. "Really, Liliana. Venice upholds a Masquerade these nights. You never know who might be watching." He found himself looking for recognizable vampires among the partying kine in the Palazzo Marcello, before noticing Gian was visibly gagging. The ghoul couldn't keep his gaze on the Lazarene squatting in the gondola.

"Not a single existing thing can force me to adhere to your society's obfuscation," the hair-thin black lips rippled around her teeth as the voice choked out. "But I desire masks. Hand-crafted Venetian masks." A gaunt arm rose from her cloak to point in the direction of mortals bearing

facades of the moon, sun, winter, and death. "Such as the type worn by those dancers. No less than seven score will suffice. All must be different."

Jacopo put his hands together and bowed his head. "Of course. You are attending a gala, and wish for more than your current—" he gestured towards the death mask in her lap, "—disguises. To where do you require delivery?"

Liliana suddenly stood in the gondola, taking Gian by surprise and rocking the vessel enough to make Jacopo seize the sides. Looking down at the Sétite, she replaced her death mask and put one bare foot on the walnut of the starboard side. "Guggenheim Museum. The dead tell us the Camarilla's new Justicars intend to meet there three months hence for a Masquerade Ball, along with select dignitaries of other Clans. Your delivery will be to the art storage cellars the day before the party. Several of my companions will await within."

Looking up at the emaciated corpse as Gian attempted to right the boat, Jacopo frowned. "It will be done, cousin of Hades. But Liliana — were members of your bloodline invited to such an exclusive soiree?"

Liliana's hard gaze answered his question. She silently stepped into the impenetrably black waters. Jacopo stared after her, at the void of darkness surrounding the gondola. Not a ripple remained.

A Fable Agreed Upon

As written by Khurshid, Wearer of the Sun Mask

History is only what is written. When it goes unwritten, it becomes a source of endless conjecture. The past of our lineage is remembered by me differently than how my sire remembers, or the kin with whom I share this mausoleum recall, so we play a game of who can tell the more tragic, inspiring tale. Perhaps there will come a night where a single account strikes us a resounding blow of realization. Perhaps not. The River Lethe takes memories from one, and there's no guarantee of their ever returning in full.

I feel it to a degree pleasing to shroud our past in layers of mystery and seals of tar, not dissimilar to the wraps festooning the cooling bodies in this cellar. If we cannot know truth, then neither should any outside of our blood. We Harbingers sailed our ferries to the darkest pits and made an odyssey of our return. It's only natural we should wish to forget fragments of that grueling journey, and what made us set forth in the first place.

My sire claims we were not born in the Shadowlands; we were created there. It's a poetic aphorism, but perhaps not Truth. I recall my being a Harbinger long before I entered the Underworld.

Torn and Bleeding Hearts

For millennia, we chose to be known as scholars, ascetics, and diplomats. Our rich knowledge made us indispensable to other Cainites. We honed ourselves in hundreds of fields, but advertised few. In Persia, Greece, and later Rome, we became loyal subjects to magi, philosophers, and emperors. Rarely would our full array of powers be exposed, allowing us to dance in the background as empires fell, and learn from the mistakes and successes of others. I'm told of the time Emperor Caracalla of the Romans was slaughtered by his own men at the advice of one of my Harbinger brethren, who was herself in his employ. She gained little obvious benefit from murdering Caracalla, except to study and record how his followers rebuilt afterward. She carefully observed the variation in how the soul of a ruler exits a body, compared to when escaping the mouth of a deceased peasant.

As it turns out, there's little difference to be noted.

Our line was rarely renowned for its proficiency in the field of conflict. This was deliberate. I was cupbearer to the Malkavian warlord of Diyarbakır. Despite my position, my true skill was in laying waste to Theodosius' soldiers through use of blade, horse, and understanding of pestilence's carriage. My sire was a poet of Zamya, who channeled his art through the rotting corpses of loved ones. He used those same corpses as unerringly reliable killers. Our skill in dealing death was as sharp as our knowledge of its forms, but it was a secret talent.

We were a diverse family, but the relationships between mentors and apprentices were bonds of true kinship. As unappealing as we were to look upon, our vast collection of talents put the Ventrue and Followers of Set in debt to us with pleasing regularity. All the while, we concealed gifts and honed disciplines, preparing for the possibility of one night crushing the Cainite masters with whom we consorted.

This is where we Harbingers differed from our Clan's core. We possessed a cohesive focus: becoming relied upon, even essential to the working of courts far and wide. Our information network spread through the Underworld and back to the lands of the living. While our kin experimented with corpses, we opened channels to cavort with spirits. The Long Night's end could have been brought about centuries before the War of Princes commenced.

Such potential was laid to waste due to Ashur's deliration.

Our Clan was bonded only through veneration of our Father. We were the progeny of Ashur; a name oft given to vampires who succumb to the parasite feasting on their souls. Others called him Cappadocius, or Anubis, or Laodice, or Kizurra. His identity matters less than one would think. He ultimately became a deific symbol for abuse and manipulation. It's rare for any Harbinger to not think of our Father and succumb to vestigial abhorrence. My disgust for this vampire is absolute, as despite our fulfilling works, he saw fit to sacrifice the majority of his childer — his family — as grist for the foul mills churning in his soul. Ashur possessed profound deficiency in sanity, honor, and awareness. He ever lacked the shard of a soul leading to peace and resolution, and was constantly driven to revelations that further muddled the little wisdom he possessed. As we reached our zenith in multiplicity, buried deep within Cainite domains ranging from the Gothic Kingdoms to the Pyu City States, our doom came at his command.

Father deemed us unworthy of this immortal life. He ripped our hearts to pieces as Set did to Osiris, and we were too afraid of this insane demigod to resist the edict. I witnessed my sire, four childer, and hundreds of my kin descend into oblivion because Ashur elected on a whim to punish them for transgressions never adequately explained.

We could have fought back. We should have. To my eternal shame, I didn't lift a finger as I watched my beloved childer disappear into the darkness. Knowing now what they went through, I despise myself for not following them.

Lazarus

Lazarus resisted. Father's childe rebuked the fallacy of our failure, and led a horde of fellows from Ashur's slaughterhouse to the safety of Egypt. We survivors called ourselves "Lazarenes," and diverted our death magics into assisting the Followers of Set, for whom Lazarus possessed fondness. I followed Lazarus in anguish for my personal loss, and rage for the contacts, agents, and plans put to ruin by a maniac's purge.

"Of what dire crime could we be so guilty as to surrender eternal life?" was a question asked frequently by Lazarus and his disciples. We spread throughout the African continent in efforts to coax any surviving, disenfranchised members of our Clan to the fold, using Lazarus' honeyed words of vengeance and former glories. We occasioned to travel overseas to do likewise, but Ashur's minions were keen to obliterate us when we encountered them. From this point, the shadow war between the sycophantic devotees of Father and we Lazarenes commenced, and never really ceased.

Our mantra was simple: "We will present Ashur with the skulls of those he murdered, before shredding his soul as he destroyed ours."

Some among my kin place our founding as Harbingers at the point of Ashur's great betrayal. Lazarus united us in hatred for Father. I realize before — when we acted as regal worms in the bellies of other Cainite domains — we lacked a formal title. Despite this, it was mostly the former Cainites I knew — and know — as Harbingers who flocked to Lazarus' banner.

In any case, titles lack relevance in the greater story.

The Followers of Set requested tutelage in necromancy, offering half a millennium's protection as payment. They were keen to use our gifts for tracing the spiritual path of their god. There were those among us who taught Setites basic rituals and powers affecting the body, but Lazarus was clear we must never explain how the souls of the dead may be summoned, or their lands entered. This agreement survived for little over a century before the Serpents' demands became such that if we refused, we would be cast to the desert winds.

Our greatest assets were ever the clandestine information we accrued in our centuries of service to other Clans, and our gifts of necromancy. When it came to our survival, we chose to divulge all information accumulated on the domains, personages, and abilities of the Assamites. It was a grand cache of intelligence, which I understand the Setites put to destructive use. Begrudgingly, the Setites ensured our sanctuary was maintained for a few centuries more.

Purging the Sin

True disciples of Lazarus would have you believe he manipulated the Giovanni family into their betrayal of Ashur and his vapid lickspittles. I'm not nearly so blinded by devotion. Lazarus saved us from Father, but he was unprepared for the Giovanni's pogrom.

We all felt reverberations from the attack. As Father's spirit splintered, and a part plummeted to whatever hell awaited it, his descent acted as an anchor. Those of us not pulled to the Shadowlands in his wake were mystified, and unprepared for the regimented attacks the Giovanni brought against us. If Father delivered the mortal wound to our Clan, theirs was the killing blow.

I consider it a disgrace that we were forced to retreat to the same Underworld prison Ashur sent our kin. It was the one place the Giovanni were too weak to explore. Lazarus implored us to retreat, and offered salvation even to the adulators of our dying Father, if they were prepared to forsake Ashur and his hold.

With haste we tied up affairs, aware of our impending death sentence. Cainites who knew and appreciated us could not understand our swift, yet melancholic actions as we settled debts and archived records for lifetimes to come. The destruction of Father was — although a joy — also a great shame. This was vengeance denied, snatched by capricious fledglings and neonates. Few of us communicated reasons for our depressing exodus to the tender mercies of the Shadowlands. Lazarus advised that a city of vampires in the Underworld awaited those of us who could find it, but few discovered the trail. For an interminably long time, we roamed the lands of the dead, tormented by the wraiths we once attempted to control.

The fate of our kin who remained in the lands of the living is known to Cainite scholars, but some footnotes were lost. Notably, one Roger de Camden petitioned for our Clan's admittance to the Camarilla. My understanding is while Clans Brujah, Nosferatu, and Ventrue agreed to the proposal, the Toreador, Tremere, Malkavian, and Gangrel quietly decided no alms would be given. Their rejection damned my wayward kin. The budding Camarilla drew our ire for their inaction.

Ashur's acolytes were ours to punish, and the Camarilla allowed Giovanni to play executioner.

Voyage down the Styx

The Underworld is a terrifying place to spend a single night, let alone several centuries. The majority of Harbingers lost their minds, bodies, and spirits to hungry wraiths, and

to each other. It took years to develop rituals allowing us to feed from beyond the Shroud. Until that time, hunger forced us to subsist on herds — few of which survived more than a month — and then cannibalism.

The numbers diablerie cost us are more than I care to count. In truth, I cannot remember much of existence in the Shadowlands. The rivers of the damned steal memory as we drain blood. Sometimes the Shadowlands find a way to plant a new reminiscence, its nightmare-weaving inhabitants taking delight in driving us insane with conflicted memories. We were attacked relentlessly. Some Harbingers slew themselves. Others became convinced they were ghosts. Years trapped in the Underworld forced many to torpor, but the Shadowlands are no haven in which to rest a head.

We had always resembled corpses, but swimming the Lethe savaged our bodies. It's reckoned by some Harbingers the Lethe scoured our flesh as we were recognized as false inhabitants of the Shadowlands. We became lost among one another, forced to adopt masks in order to recognize former friends and foes.

My theory — perhaps addled by memorial hatred — is our faces were lost to Ashur. The Giovanni who thought him destroyed did not realize they sent a portion of his soul to the Shadowlands. I recollect being damned as traitor to the blood, my very countenance stripped as I was castigated for failing Father. Deferred sentencing due centuries before. Even in this state, Father's disappointment in his progeny was supreme.

Moments of elation in the Underworld were fleeting, but when they did occurr, we celebrated with merry dances of the dead. The rare occasions we encountered members of our line long thought lost to the Underworld were joyous beyond measure. I reencountered my sire in such a fashion, and we celebrated with the theft of a Giovanni ghoul from across the Shroud, dining on him for weeks.

Throughout our time in this hell, we spied and intruded on the plans of Cainites and mortals. We offered wraiths tortured by Giovanni our future aid against the Venetians. All we asked was peace. Our numbers were depleted, but a detente formed. Our information networks grew, along with our caches of rich intelligence on Cainite behavior and court intrigue. From our safety beyond the veil, we became the ultimate voyeurs.

Over the years, a vampire calling himself the Capuchin appeared to us, offering guidance to sanctuaries not threatened by Tempest, Spectres, and worse. He was our guardian angel in times of great woe. We would make offerings to him as if he were some visiting god whenever his cloaked form approached. In retrospect, we supplicated ourselves disgracefully. When he showed himself most recently, and removed his mask to reveal the visage of Lazarus, we knew he would return us to the lands of the living. He came to us with a promise:

"Half a millennium of torment is half a millennium of wisdom. As you suffered the needles of malevolence, you listened to every word spoken by your jailor. You will use every one of those words as weapons. Your role is as Harbingers of Skulls. You are the dagger, poised to slice open the soul of Ashur and every one of his servants. You will present your skulls to Father, and herald the end."

The Importance of Masks

Pogroms have slaughtered the Harbingers for over a millennium. Whether from within or without, fate has been intent on periodically whittling down the numbers of the Lazarenes, scrubbing their identities from history books and in the case of their time in the Shadowlands — their own memories.

Harbingers known as the Disciples award members of the bloodline masks implying status, role, and achievements prior to and since their reemergence. They range from plain death masks to baroque constructions of stunning complexity. Aside from providing suitable disguise in Elysium and at esbat, each imbedded jewel, painted frown, and curved horn tells other Harbingers something of the bearer's past, so even if they forget, others might remember.

A mask might state whether the wearer is fool or scholar, necromancer or diplomat. Each precious stone indicates a ritual created. The curvature of the mask's nose tells how many Giovanni the wearer's slain. The mask's resemblance to a lost Harbinger confirms true status, as the Lazarenes are dedicated to avenging their fallen ranks.

Omens Enacted

As spoken by Marchesa Liliana, Wearer of the Triple-Faced Mask

You will be told many times these nights how we serve one vampire or another. Primary among all concerns is we are not slaves. We practiced the servile role as a subterfuge for generations, but that time is past.

Ah, but what of Lazarus? If the ancient Cappadocian has anything to do with us, I've yet to see evidence. I've not met him, nor heard his voice, nor do I follow the authority of those so close to Antediluvians. I was never Cappadocian. I was always Harbinger. Others claim differently, but this is my truth.

I say with certainty, our bloodline harbors a quite instinctive hatred for the vampires calling themselves Giovanni and Camarilla. I could proclaim Giovanni as rivals to our realm of necromancy, due to their meddling in matters ethereal, but I know our loathing for the family and the Ivory Tower goes deeper, to the lowest level of the Underworld, where the Neverborn and a portion of our Antediluvian dwells.

Our Antediluvian is the important factor. We despise the Giovanni for slaying Cappadocius. This may appear contrary to our hate for the Clan founder, but listen; Cappadocius was no fool. Every step of Giovanni betrayal was utterly orchestrated by Cappadocius and his underlings.

You ask "why?" A lesser scholar would attribute such self-sacrifice to insanity, but Cappadocius' mind was on a higher plane than we mere immortals. Do not try to understand the workings of a god.

If you must hear my theory, it's a simple one: Cappadocius reviled us as much as we loathed him. He was frustrated by our failures; in a great convulsion, he decided he would start anew through the Familia Giovanni. His death was a small part of the plan. Cappadocius lives on through fragments. One within Augustus Giovanni, another within the Shadowlands, and the final bound somewhere in the Skinlands.

We do not hate the Giovanni for their act of murder, or for their theft of our vengeance, but for their being unwitting tools of Cappadocius. The Camarilla likewise. All are ignorant to the alien behavior of their founders; intelligences beyond comprehension. The Sabbat—despite

the tangled strings controlling the organization — are the only vampires who recognize the danger, even if they fail to understand the nature of the threat.

We're driven by pure instinct to annihilate those servants of Cappadocius and his followers, the Giovanni among them, but where possible, we will give the option to join our enterprise. Rejection of our mercy will see them reduced to ash, their souls bound to our army of the dead.

I tell you this; revenge is a mere stop on the road to glories denied us. It is imperative you move beyond instinctive hatred of Giovanni, and become like the Harbingers of old. We can be great again, whether your ambition mirrors the dreams of entropy spread by Lazarus' disciples, is a wish for the destruction of Antediluvians and their vassals, or you desire to command the legions of wraiths with whom we've made alliance.

Greatness awaits us. Doom awaits all who oppose us.

Flesh on our Bones

As declared by The Gentleman, Wearer of the Medico Della Peste Mask

You truly are dismal little neonates to believe all we intend will be carried out through our meager numbers alone. As the beautiful Marchesa made clear, we Harbingers make inroads to disassemble the fine structure of Clan Giovanni, snatching bloodlines here, reintroducing ourselves to submerged Giovanni who never partook of the purge there. The Rossellini are my pet project. Long mistreated by the Venetians, they all but leap at the prospect of serving new masters offering them a manner of reprisal.

Revenge is a succulent course.

As we Harbingers of old would bury ourselves in the courts of our enemies, new Harbingers from among the Premascine Giovanni, along with Rossellini and Pisanob families, will become Harbingers within their own Clan. They have but to lose their faces.

When we were at our height, the Harbingers were the skeleton of Cainite society. You've no doubt heard the old Malkavian proverb attributing Clans various body parts. We glued those fleshy parts together, whether they realize it or not. A body should not be without a skeleton, for it grows soft and pliable. How is it you think the cursed Antediluvians manipulate the Camarilla with such ease? Our absence caused this weakness, so now you see why Laodice and the nascent Camarilla were so enthusiastic for our annihilation.

We've renewed relations with the Followers of Typhon, or whatever they call themselves these nights. We remember their oath of protection, and their failure to protect. They may be Serpents, but the eldest among them honor pacts and have been suitably meek when presented with requests for a renewal. We therefore spread throughout Setite domains with little reprisal, even being awarded territory, as we possess proficiencies and knowledge Serpents still crave.

It strikes you as hypocritical how we lay abed with vampires who outwardly worship their founder, when we know the dangers such daemons present. Rest assured, little neonate; Lazarus has addressed this issue. The vampire known as Sutekh is gone — shattered into infinity — but the Setites do not believe this. We play the game of manipulation better than they, as we are not smitten with promises of divinity. Through our consorting, we continue to tease them with the promises of necromancy, while gaining the benefits of their peculiar, faith-based powers.

The Lasombra mystics of Iberia have become partners in the years since our return to the lands of the living. It's all very well proclaiming your membership in the Sabbat, but if one of the pillars does not stand for you, you might as well be screaming into the Tempest. Thankfully, several prominent Lasombra — including those notorious Knights of the Abyss, Sir Talley and Lord Rickard Argentis — have taken an interest in our voyages through the Underworld. They believe we know something of their Abyss. We call it by other names, but the Neverborn denizens of the Shadowlands and those alien beings with whom the Lasombra consort share undeniable similarities. Keepers have thus supported Lazarenes attaining positions of sectarian prominence in the Americas, and we are beholden to them for this kindness.

We've regrettably failed to make accord with Clan Tzimisce, to date. I recall nights when we acted as chamberlains and spymasters in their castles, but the bloodline has thinned and lost all pretense of nobility. I'm told Cardinal Alleluia of their Clan denounces us as "eaters of souls," which is rich coming from a vampire infamous for her practice of diablerie.

Despite our lack of success so far, you'd do well to parlay with the Fiends, and find common cause. Surround yourself with members of their Clan, and share vitae if you must. Become the eager Sabbat recruit they want you to be, and we may gain some traction within this cumbersome Sect.

The Camarilla does produce some vampires of a high caliber. Our greatest sorrow is in the withering of our fine friendship with the Ventrue. Like the Tzimisce, few these nights would know us to look at us. In truth, the Ventrue were our favorite

marks. If you manage to work your way into the good graces of a Ventrue Prince, little neonate, I should think my heart might beat for the first time in over a millennium. You could, perhaps, even be forgiven for joining the Ivory Tower.

Healers of the Soul

As muttered by Abraham, Wearer of the Gatto Mask

I truly have little time for your bemused questioning, so allow me to be germane.

Clearly, we would strengthen our line through the Embrace of mortals. Yet the disciples of Lazarus make it clear we're not to Embrace until every last Lazarene is rescued from the Shadowlands. It's an ongoing ordeal, and frankly, I see no end in sight.

Do not interrupt me, pest! I am getting to you. Yes, your existence proves not every Harbinger follows Lazarus. Some indeed have Embraced since our reappearance. Hells, I know of Harbingers Embraced in the 18th century, as some escaped earlier than most, through use of experimental rituals I personally developed. The numbers have always been low, with such progeny treated poorly by Lazarus' disciples.

By my reckoning, all newly created Harbingers ought spend a duration within the Shadowlands to gain a flavor of our struggle. Those who do fly their sire's cloying coop and visit the Underworld are more highly regarded, returning with skulls permanently scored of flesh.

I anticipate a change in our line's attitude towards childer in coming years. We are few, and most suffer a violent form of what the kine call post-traumatic stress disorder, among other diseases of the mind. Centuries locked in the land of the dead produce such symptoms. Children are said to be healers of the soul, however, and the positive behavior of Harbingers who have Embraced is notable, when compared to those who still struggle to leave sepulchers for fear of being consumed by the Tempest.

Now, get out of my library, and touch nothing as you leave. Wretched fledgling.

A Delightful Hiding Place for Weary Men

As whispered by Erebus, Wearer of the Pantalone Mask

Everything you've been told is a lie. I don't recognize one of these Cainites as kin. Let me tell you why.

I'm a wraith.

You think me mad, but in truth I am just one who knows the truth. When a vampire spends masses of time in the Shadowlands, they lose segments of their soul. They live a half-life. They can never return in full unless a wraith takes possession of their body. You see where this is going?

Yes, many Cainites journeyed to the Shadowlands. Cappadocian, Nagaraja, Lamiae, Erinyes... Scores have made the Descent of Orpheus, but by the time they return, the Styx has rearranged their souls. It convinces them of a past that never happened. It's all subterfuge to put Puppeteers such as myself into Cainite society as sleeper agents. When the time is right, the Lady of Fate will activate hundreds of wraiths riding their hosts.

We'll ferry the entire desolate civilization of vampires to its rightful place. These creatures have cheated Charon for too long. It's time to be delivered. Lazarus knows, and he would keep you all ignorant for his own purposes. This can't be permitted.

Why am I telling you? Well, my friend; the time has come.

Wake up. Your flesh is a vessel. Take the reins and cast off the lie.

He Who Controls the Past, Controls the Future

As decreed by the Wearer of the Capuchin Mask

You've suffered greatly for centuries, but now your suffering ends. You've rejoined your kin, the Harbingers of Skulls, and you're to live up to your name. The suffering you felt will be repaid to our enemies a thousand fold.

I'm proud to call you disciple. You always were, before you descended. You do not remember. I forgive your confusion. You will remember. You were ever my disciple.

Our Father would see himself made God. You know his sadism. You know we cannot allow this to happen. The Sabbat is the best vehicle for our virtuous fury. We shall strike down his Giovanni pawns, the Clans of the Camarilla who serve their own Fathers, and the childer of Lazarus who would subvert our bloodline for their own aims.

Everything shall be rendered unto nothing, so we may rebuild. Trust only in the Capuchin. Trust only in Japheth Cappadocius, as you have always trusted.

You will always by my disciple.

Shadowlands Shellshock

Harbingers of Skulls who spent any length of time in the Shadowlands often bear the mental scars, after years of harrying by horrifying spirits and worse denizens of the Underworld.

Derangements such as Amnesia, Fugue, Paranoia, and Schizophrenia are prevalent among Harbingers of Skulls. If you wish to take one as a Flaw, discuss the symptoms of your character's Derangement, and your Storyteller can assign it a point value.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Carnevale Masquer

The devil hides best in plain sight. You organize enticing Elysiums for the Camarilla, and thrilling esbats for the Sabbat. Your face isn't acceptable in polite society, but neither were the countenances of the syphilitics and leprous nobles of centuries gone by. Like them, you've a selection of masks, allowing you to circulate with your lessers as they spill their secrets. When the time is right, you'll split Cainite society open down the fissures you've created with destructive intrigues. As the world falls apart, you'll be tripping the dance of the dead.

Conflicted Disciple

You're an adherent, but doubts wrack you. Lazarus rescued you from destruction twice; by saving your hide from the insane Ashur, and by sending you into the Shadowlands when the Giovanni came knocking. You'd lay down your existence for Lazarus, but you question his altruism. All he asks is your ascent within the Sabbat. He says it's the best weapon against Ashur. You hone your Necromancy and offer tutelage to other Sabbat, yet the more you follow Lazarus' decree, the more you realize your liberty to choose. You're tempted to use your new freedom to escape the repetitive entropy afflicting your bloodline.

Rossellini Turncoat

The Milliners can go fuck themselves. They constantly complain about their treatment by the bosses, but they go no further than moaning. You found a way of climbing the totem pole without having to kiss Venetian ass for an eternity. These Harbingers will let you do whatever you want with the spirits of the dead, as long as you sabotage the Giovanni. These Lazarenes even said you can "keep what you kill" when it comes to the war with the Venetians, and you've got your eye on the soul of the stunning Claudia. The cost was high; your initiation was pain beyond anything you've felt, and the tortures the Harbingers' wraiths then visited upon you was worse, but a month (or was it a year?) later, and you're ready for action. A shame your face has atrophied, and your body is catching up, but a styling mask and a tailor-made suit conceal the worst of the damage.

Merits and Flaws

Disciple of Lazarus / Japheth (2pt. Merit)

You speak for the powers-that-be within your bloodline, and bear the clean, white death mask of a respected Harbinger lost to one of the historic purges suffered by your people. Most Harbingers of Skulls will listen to what you say, and take your words at face value. This Merit adds two dice to any Social roll when you invoke the name of Lazarus or Japheth.

Styx Baptism (3pt. Merit)

You pledged fealty to the Harbingers of Skulls and swore to work against the machinations of Ashur, despite not being Embraced into the bloodline. You were escorted to the Shadowlands, where you were baptized head-first in the churning waters of the Styx. The flesh upon your head sloughed off with contact over the coming month, leaving just rotten patches or bare bone, reducing your Appearance Rating to 0 permanently. You're now held in esteem by Lazarenes, gaining any one of the bloodline's Disciplines as a Clan Discipline in place of one of your own.

Half-Life (6pt. Merit)

You're more than just a vampire; you're a wraith in vampire form. Your awareness of the realities of death enables you to spend half the regular experience points cost for increasing Necromancy Paths after the first point, and permits you to move between Shadowlands and Skinlands through the expenditure of a Willpower point. You cannot be controlled as a normal spirit through use of Necromancy, but should other vampires discover what you are, you can expect to be hunted mercilessly. You suffer the same weaknesses and have the same strengths as a vampire, but if viewed with a power such as Aura Perception (V20, p. 135) the aura appears as a double-exposure, with a wavering, translucent humanoid shape merging in and out of yours.

Unsanctioned Embrace (2pt. Flaw)

Lazarus decreed no Harbingers should Embrace, but your sire failed to listen. You're hopelessly green and unworthy of the vitae in your veins. Until you perform acts befitting the nobility of your blood, your existence is shunned as a bad omen. Increase difficulties of all Social actions involving your bloodline by two.

Shadow Scarred (3pt. Flaw)

Since escaping the Shadowlands, you've struggled to reacclimatize to the world of the living. You see ravenous Spectres in every shadow. You must roll your Courage (difficulty 7) or spend a point of Willpower whenever using Necromancy, as you fear the repercussions of touching the Underworld.

Combination Disciplines

Bloodied Hands (Necromancy •, Auspex ••)

Even among immortals, the act of murder is often concealed. Lazarenes use their connection to the auguries of death as potent blackmail material. Through piercing the obfuscations surrounding another being's soul, the Harbinger can identify her target's most recent victim.

System: The player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7). Success allows the necromancer to view details of the last sentient being killed by the target. The results are perceived only by the necromancer, and last the duration of the scene.

Successes	Result
1 success	The victim's face takes the place of his killer's.
2 successes	The victim's body also takes the place of his killer's.
3 successes	The victim's cause of death becomes physically apparent.
4 successes	The victim's voice speaks the events immediately leading up to his death.
5 successes	The victim can voice as much of his life history as time permits.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Leer of Hades (Necromancy ••, Serpentis •)

In Ancient Greece, the Harbingers of Skulls knew the Followers of Set as Childer of Typhon, the Serpents recognizing the Harbingers as kin of Hades. The close relationship the bloodlines shared led to their coordination of powers, to ensure the souls of their kin who met Final Death would go on serving their respective Clans. This technique was used to reward loyal kin with honored places in the afterlife, as often as it was used to punish errant vampires with eternal servitude.

System: The necromancer must successfully fix another vampire with The Eyes of the Serpent (V20, p. 209) up to one week prior to that vampire's Final Death. The gaze of the necromancer is burned into the soul of the vampire, and if she dies within the week, the night following her death will see her reconstituted as a wraith in the necromancer's presence. The wraith is not bound to service, unless separate powers are used.

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Sutekh Fathers Anubis (Necromancy ••••, Serpentis ••••)

Developed by Lazarus, and the principal reason for his victory over Clanmates sent to kill him, the Cainite with this power can change form into a monstrous, rotting jackal over seven feet from foot to shoulder blade. This Anubis form grants the vampire greater damage from her bite, the ability to travel faster than a human, an enhanced sense of smell, and the physical fortitude of a corpse infused with necromancy.

System: The vampire spends one blood point and one Willpower, rolling Stamina + Occult (difficulty 7). The metamorphosis takes two turns. Clothing and small personal possessions transform with the vampire. The vampire remains in jackal form until the next dawn, unless she chooses to revert. Difficulty on all Perception rolls related to smell are reduced by two, and the jackal's bite inflicts an additional two points of damage, without need to grapple. The form can move twice as fast as a human, and benefits from the cadaver-like resilience bestowed by Gift of the Corpse (V20, p. 169.) Any of the vampire's Disciplines can still be used in this form.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Necromantic Rituals

Generation of the Acheron Vortex (Level Two Ritual)

Harbingers of Skulls who taste the blood of Lasombra find their link to the Styx reawakened. Under the new moon, the necromancer must spill blood comprising Harbinger and Lasombra vitae into any body of water (from a puddle, to an ocean) and listen to voices from across the Shroud with a ritual such as Call of the Hungry Dead (V20, p. 177). A vortex forms, with each point of blood spilt making the whirlpool last an additional turn. Stepping into the vortex takes the vampire to the Shadowlands equivalent of the body of water, and a single person (mortal or vampire) can follow for each turn the vortex is still active. The ritual works in reverse, but requires the expenditure of two blood points from each individual following the necromancer from the Shadowlands to the Skinlands, and can only take place on a night under the full moon.

MARK
KELLY
16

Kiasyd

"If you can think of anything more terrifying than that happening to you in the middle of the night, then let's hear about it."

— Roald Dahl, *The BFG*

Daddy Long-Legs

Even when being pursued by a coterie of Camarilla partisans, Nathaniel McCabe never ran. The Weirdling advanced confidently, in long strides befitting his stature. He needed to remain focused on everything he knew about his trackers. He stopped to check his trail, the neighborhood, and his appearance in a reflection. Popping his collar and adjusting the brim of his hat, he approached a nearby house. As the moon peered out from behind a cloud, he knocked the door with a signet-ringed finger.

Without pause, he made eye contact with the pitiable man opening the door, his black orbs penetrating his victim's wavering pupils. "Permit me enter, stand vigil, and fire this gun at anyone fixin' to follow." His voice lisped through fangs in a tuneful accent, and didn't await a response as he jammed his derringer into the man's sweating palms.

Nathaniel took the stairs four at a time. The gunfire downstairs signaled imminent peril. A disheveled woman bursting from a bedroom with a pistol in hand was given short shrift, as with the flick of Nathaniel's wrist a burst of blackness tipped her over the landing.

The upturned tricycle on the lawn, the family station wagon; each were clues leading him to this perfect battleground. Not much of a mystery, but Nathaniel adored conundrums of any complexity. As he entered the bedroom, he leered widely at the confused pair of children. They looked up at him, one clutching his Action Bill figurine like it might offer some form of defense, as he shouted "Mom! Dad! Help!"

"They ain't gone hear you." The sound of feet tramping upstairs echoed around the house, as Nathaniel painted a simple spiral sigil on the door. He grabbed one boy and jerked him out of bed as he backed his lanky frame into the far corner of the room. Happily, he realized he must resemble some freakishly big daddy long-legs.

The door burst open, four Kindred on the other side of the threshold bearing teeth and claws. Earlier in the night, he'd discovered one of the few Camarilla holdouts remaining in D.C. As a result, his elimination had become a priority for these agents of the Ivory Tower.

"You gone done it now, licks." As the vampires entered the bedroom, bedlam took its toll; the ward's effects penetrated the intruders' minds. Three of them clutched their heads, stumbling like drunks as they fumbled for an exit they found impossible to locate.

Nathaniel's smugness faltered as he observed the ever impressive Tabitha Prester hanging back, leveling her shotgun at the Kiasyd. "Your wards won't work on me, McCabe. I'll blow you to fucking kingdom come before you tell a soul about our haven."

"Such a dirty mouth, Tabitha. Your mama oughta wash it out." Nathaniel slid forward with the child in one arm, three long fingers jammed in the boy's mouth to silence his crying. "I reckon your trigger finger ain't so fast to save both these boys. Here's a conundrum, Gangrel; can you live with causing the death of one more innocent? Last time you liketa lost control entirely."

With amusement, McCabe watched as Tabitha attempted to mouth an answer. Her eyes questioned, but her body would not move. "I know all about you and your weaknesses, Tabby. I done read Vitel's old diaries pretty well. I might could be leavin' with this boy, as insurance, you unnerstand? Don't pursue now. I'll hurt him bad, and it'll be all your fault. Just like last time."

Even when pushing passed four stupefied Camarilla with a child in hand, Nathaniel McCabe never ran. One of the fiercest Gangrel in D.C. tried to form words, but instead, vitae just leaked from her eyes.

The Black Sheep

A wise Cainite once said; "A truth that's told with bad intent beats all the lies you can invent."

I just lied. William Blake was never a Cainite, more's the pity. He'd make a fine member of our bloodline. I daresay our falsehoods are believed more readily than any bona fide facts I could present, yet truths are requested, so truths you shall get.

Just don't blame me if you do not believe them.

You know the Kiasyd of tonight to be a bloodline of the Lasombra Clan, and are well-read enough to know also we are descended from Marconius, the founder of our kind. There are no Kiasyd outside that lineage.

Any theorized weakness we have or had due to connection with creatures known as "fae" or "changelings" is purely hypothetical. We're far more than mere Cainites, not less.

I did intimate you may not believe me. Wet your quill. Use the — heh — inkpot over there. The words you write shall be my testament. You'd do well to refer to them before questioning others of our blood.

The Toils of Marconius

Marconius and his sister Hrotsuitha were magi.

I see your quill's already ceased scratching. You heard me correctly. Now, the Lasombra weren't known for their dabbling in thaumaturgic arts, but it's remiss to believe our august Clan hadn't Embraced some mortals familiar with the power of the Abyss.

Marconius and his sister were such scholars. They were consumed by the idea of creating the perfect being, possessed of vitae, the dreams of changelings, and the souls of magi. If an alchemical mixture comprised of such glorious components could be fed to a subject, the organism created would be perfection embodied, and elevate the creators to godhood, surely.

Oh, the caprice of magi. No amount of experimentation kept their constructs alive.

In an irony that even now embitters Marconius, he was brought into Clan Lasombra due to his mortal status as an influential noble. His sire wasn't even aware of the alchemical brilliance Marconius possessed. Still, our founder put his new powers as a Cainite to use. He gave the Embrace to his sister, and then attempted to Embrace their latest experiment.

Still no joy. The heady concoction Marconius created affronted God and science. After being given doses of several distilled wondrous creatures, the subject was drained of his blood, before receiving Marconius' vitae.

The subject emitted a hundred voices of the Abyss before melting into a pool of oily substances.

It was Hrotsuitha who unraveled Marconius' Gordian Knot. Unlike her brother, she focused on learning the true arts of the Lasombra. She claimed the components of the experiment were correct, but the environment and sponsors were not. The creation must be made within the Abyss itself, out of God's sight and with the blessing of a group known as the Thallain.

Alas, by this time Marconius had lost all wealth and title to his Clan, and was unable to locate a perfect subject. The Lasombra ever have been Cainites unafraid to kick their childer into the dirt and keep them there.

Don't write that.

In an act of faith and sacrifice, Hrotsuitha volunteered herself as the final test subject. With heavy hearts, the siblings entered the Abyss.

Marconius' account tells us he fed Hrotsuitha some ungodly brew of vitae, Unseelie, Abyss, and the Lord knows what else, while creatures of living nightmare bred and destroyed around them. He then drained her dry. He never told anyone what became of his sibling, but her fate was likely unpleasant. He returned, still a vampire, yet possessed of unusual endowments marking him as *other* to his fellow Cainites.

But, was his experiment a success? Was Hrotsuitha's sacrifice in vain?

The jury's still out.

The Family's Shame

When the Amici Noctis discovered Marconius' acts they were displeased, to put it mildly. He'd Embraced without consent, performed experiments within the Abyss without permission, and had returned visibly changed.

Marconius' reward for his experimentation would have been destruction, were it not for the intervention of Boukephos. The Lasombra Methuselah saw some merit in our founder, and instead instructed he be held in an oubliette, segregated from the Clan but allowed to continue his experimentation with the Abyss and beasts of all types.

It's worth noting it took up to 80 years for his confinement to take effect. During this time, Marconius' actions are mysterious. It's said he visited Castel d'Ombro as a guest, Embraced a score of childer, attempted to reverse his condition, and even opened a permanent gate to the Abyss beneath the Alps. Unraveling fact from fiction when it comes to Marconius is a Sisyphean task, so don't bother.

The Lasombra attempted to suppress knowledge of Marconius' existence, but somehow the Toreador of the Courts of Love — it's from the Dark Ages; look it up — discovered his actions. The Keepers were overwhelmed with shame. Kiasyd were not fit for the noble Clan of the Night; therefore we were removed from the Clan's annals, and from polite society.

A New Dawn

Lasombra's murder changed all that.

The Kiasyd's role in the Anarch Revolt is minor. Supposedly, the Toreador offered us protection around the same time Gratiano sought advice from one of Marconius' errant, free childer on how best to vex his sire, the Lasombra Antediluvian. It could be propaganda, to give our line undue credit, but the childe — known these nights as the Arcadian — swears it to be true.

Recall what Blake said of truths and question why the Arcadian assisted a Clan that shunned us like mongrels for centuries, when a better offer from the Toreador apparently existed.

Nevertheless, the prisoner in the oubliette was released once the Anarch Revolt was stymied, and the Sabbat was picking up pace. We eagerly awaited Marconius' emergence from the black, to discover what he'd worked on during his long imprisonment beneath Castel d'Ombro.

Sadly, Marconius had become an imbecile. Unrivaled alchemist he may have once been, but the Marconius who tentatively peered from his cell was an institutionalized moron. He was afraid to leave, and when forced, babbled incessantly about the things with which he'd been forced to share the dark.

When I encountered the Arcadian recently, I raised the question of why Marconius never sent himself to torpor. The Arcadian answered he had indeed done so, but it wasn't enough to drown out the unending screams of the Abyss.

With time, Marconius recovered some composure. Note I say "some." If ever left alone he would riddle himself into a frenzy. Sometimes it was worth listening at his feet to pry pearls of wisdom from his otherwise inane ramblings, but he'd succumbed to a state we call "bedlam." Despite moments of lucidity, he'll never be fully there again.

These nights Marconius holds the title of Prince of Strasbourg. Yes, *Prince*. More on that later.

As for the rest of us, the Sabbat gave us the option of remaining in Strasbourg with Marconius, or migrating widely, restricted to two to a city at most. I can't speak for their logic, but the latter option was accepted by elders among our line. It was the best decision we could have made. We were free, and so widely traveled we'd all be able to become experts in our own, specific fields, without fear of bloody rivalries rearing their heads.

Our Sect

Of course, as members of the Sabbat, we were expected to participate in the *ritae, join packs, and engage in the antics of our less urbane allies. I can't speak for the entire bloodline, but I feel we never bought into the idea of Caine veneration or Antediluvian slaying. To butcher a metaphor; it's a race in which we lacked a horse. For the purposes of diplomatic relations, we shared the occasional goblet of vitae* — but heaven forefend we drink directly from another vampire's dirty vein — and participated in crusades against the Camarilla.

We made inroads along the Paths of Enlightenment, as philosophy was an area in which we've always shone. Some of us threw ourselves wholeheartedly onto these Paths, giving eternities away for research. It's one of the few areas in which Keepers prized our existence. As we began to codify the Paths of Lilith and Honorable Accord, our cousins warmed to us. In the main, however, we kept ourselves secluded and continued personal research without interruption.

And what research! The Kiasyd obsession with study is through breeding. That is, we Embrace learned persons from an array of difference expertise. This habit started in 1716, when it was realized far too many simpletons were being Embraced for reasons of beauty and martial prowess. Such sires were sent strongly worded letters by those of us who knew better, I can tell you.

You laugh. Have you read one of our strongly worded letters?

We spent our time discovering treatises on the Abyss, the fae, and blood magic, as well as making inroads into the power Marconius' experiences bestowed. I've never begrudged the abilities of our line, but I do know many became prey to mortal inquisitors due to our appearances. Being *other* is occasionally a cross to bear.

Winter Rosebud

A REFRESHING CONCOCTION HARVESTED FROM THE VEINS OF TOREADOR, SPICED WITH A SPRIG OF MINT AND SERVED OVER ICE — THE WINTER ROSEBUD WILL CLEAR YOUR HEAD OF ALL TROUBLES. A PERFECT APÉRITIF TO DRINK UPON WAKING.
DESIGNED IN THE FAMOUS KRAKÓW BAR MLECZNY

The Great Symposium

The subject of blood magic came up repeatedly in our research, compelling us to meet together. It seemed a fine road to power through understanding, and segued nicely with our other esoteric preoccupations. In 1666, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg, we secretly arranged the first Great Symposium. This was in contravention of the Lasombra orders that we remain separated, but our excitement overwhelmed thoughts of abiding by such a pointless ruling.

Our initial meetings were splendid, with polite comparisons of study over refreshing goblets of rich vitae. Even Marconius was there, smiling and nodding, though he seemed away with the fairies, if you'll excuse the phrase. It was there Isanwayen introduced our number to drinking from flayed bodies, explaining how it was preferential to letting blood oxidize, or risking infection by drinking directly from the filthy skin of a vessel.

You've not tried it? I cannot recommend it enough, especially from virginal vessels. The taste is pure gold.

I've become distracted. Ah yes; blood magic. We considered that, beside us, the most advanced vampire state was exemplified by the Tremere. Marconius was of similar — albeit not Hermetic — heritage, and the alchemical mix of the most dangerous predators upon this Earth was within our vitae. It seemed likely with the correct trials we could advance further. Marconius began to talk profusely and sagely on the secrets the Abyss and Thallain would gift us. He also advocated reaching out to the Tremere.

That's when the arguments started. "You'd alter our blood further? Look at us!" cried some. "We must steal the blood of the Tremere as they did the blood of the Salubri!" proclaimed others. "Alliance with the Warlocks betrays our Sabbat sponsors!" announced the occasional Kiasyd trying too hard. My point is, in the 100 years we'd drifted; our views had changed substantially from one another, if indeed they were ever similar.

The fourth Great Symposium, held in Constantinople in 1866 was cataclysmic. We'd invited a Tremere — that tattooed virtuoso of Skopje, Pyotr Stanislav — to this event. We wanted him to hear the promise of our lines working together, forming vampires even more evolved than his Clan or our bloodline.

Alas, many took umbrage at his attendance. Maybe it was due to Sect leanings, or Kiasyd seeing the Great Symposium as an affair exclusive to our bloodline, but bloodshed was the result. Kiasyd killed one another as we allowed ancient disagreements to become battles. Valuable research was destroyed in the inferno that followed. Such valuable research. I still weep to remember the papers I lost.

Oh, Stanislav didn't make it out either.

Since then, it's been hard to find members of our bloodline who trust one another. We lost so much at the Symposium, and no few of us believe it was a calculated attempt by the slower thinkers to sabotage the research of individuals outpacing them. Resentment and civil conflict reverberated through our bloodline. One month before the Great Symposium of 1916, Pherydima found her entire dissertation on the true names of Abyssal entities stolen by another Kiasyd. Fae sigils were left at the crime scene. Once upon a time, such a heinous offense wouldn't have been dreamt of by the lowest Weirdling. The thief was never discovered.

The Great Symposiums were canceled for the entire 20th century. Thankfully, their reprisal's due next year. Hopefully, it signals a new era. I pray tempers have cooled sufficiently to allow civil discourse, exchange of information, and the magics of advancement our line has long been due.

Has your ink ran dry? Cut a new hole, for now we enter the present.

Ladies, Gentlemen, and Other

If the skin is too hairy, shave it before writing upon it.

We are *other, as far as vampires outside our bloodline are concerned. We're therefore entitled the status of "bugaboos," which*

comes with as many perks as it does disadvantages. Should one of our line desire attention at an esbat, all she need do is show her face. Should the same Kiasyd wish to strike terror into her enemies—or friends, for that matter—she must simply smile.

Unfortunately, being on the fringe has also lost us the trust of other vampires. Our practices seem unusual to others, but come as second nature to us. The heart wants what the heart wants, and all that. Just because other Clans are so unrefined as to balk at feeding from sleeping children and drinking changeling blood, doesn't mean we can't profit from their lack of sophistication.

Bloody Politics

Our small voice in the Sabbat grows louder these nights, due to the earnest efforts of Béatrice L'Angou in Montreal and Reverend McCabe in Washington D.C.

McCabe's a dandy and talks like an Appalachian televangelist, but he plays the political game well. He's a highly respected Noddist Bishop, and lately there's even been talk of his stepping up as temporary ruler of the capital in Archbishop Vykos' absence. These rumors have roused the jealous anger of various Lasombra, but none can deny McCabe was integral to the collapse of the corrupt bishopric within Detroit.

McCabe espouses an elevation of bloodlines and antitribu within the Sabbat, decrying the constant deferral to Lasombra and Tzimisce as the leading cause of our Sect's failings. Given the growing numbers within his target audience, his is an easy cause on which to pin one's colors. His words resound with enough truth to make listeners ignore his translucent flesh. The Sabbat would do well to continue his message.

L'Angou's knowledge of the Sabbat's history is second-to-none. Her ability to recall names, dates, words exchanged, and pack territories in every Sabbat city goes beyond impressive. Sages from throughout the Sword of Caine make pilgrimage to Montreal to get the truth of a contract signed centuries before, or clarification on archaic points of contention. She's often utilized as peacemaker between warring packs, and has even arbitrated disputes between Prisci.

Béatrice is an inspiration. She's attempted to unify our bloodline after being burgled by the traitor of 1916. There's now a bounty on the thief capable of making any Kiasyd's head turn; five decades as Béatrice's apprentice, and freedom to review any of her texts, should the thief be caught. Never before has she opened her library's doors. Contrary to my expectation of this offer leading to bitter competition, lines of communication have re-opened between long estranged Kiasyd, in an effort to benefit from Béatrice's largesse.

The Sabbat isn't the only Sect in which we grow prominent. You recall I mentioned the Prince of Strasbourg? Marconius has been so for a decade now, finally taking up the offer of Toreador sanctuary. The Lasombra of Spain made a strangled noise when it occurred, but even they care little about him. Any assassins they send run the risk of discovery by watchful Camarilla, and as Marconius has always been seen as a raving fool, it hardly seems worth the effort.

Giangaleazzo, he is not.

Of course, Kiasyd fond of conspiracies may doubt Marconius' madness. Maybe he spent his last millennium playing chump so the Lasombra would underestimate him. Perhaps now that he's got the safety of the Camarilla and has mastered the qualities he acquired through communion with the Abyss, he's something more than Kiasyd. Maybe he can now entreat the Tremere as an equal, as he readies to lash out against all who wronged him. The Camarilla won't have taken him in unless he had something to offer, after all. Or perhaps he's intending on betraying Camarilla to Sabbat!

Wheels within wheels. Stare too long, and you become dizzy.

McCabe and Marconius aside, Kiasyd rarely engage in politics. We've always been more entranced by research, the accumulation of knowledge, and its application. Whether creating life or something more metaphysical, we've gained the urge to create since our Embrace. The Sabbat allows us to play doctor more freely than the Camarilla, but we do appreciate their Masquerade. Since Marconius' swerve, a number of Kiasyd have silently followed him to Camarilla domains and met little resistance. The Tremere seem quite keen to experiment with Kiasyd vitae, and vice versa. I suppose the greatest affront is the Sabbat seem happy to let us go. It's nice to know how valued we aren't.

Despite their rudeness, I've always felt at ease in the presence of Clan Lasombra. They wear the Abyss like a cloak, and we are byproducts of the Abyss. Yes, we're treated like scum, but if they weren't around I doubt the remainder of the Sabbat would vouch for us. Lasombra encourage us to study for them, take on risky experiments for them, and generally endanger our existences for them. They think we're lapdogs. They don't realize how much we enjoy the role.

Redcap Nightcap

FOR A FLAVOR YOU WANT TO SAVOR, YOU CAN DO A LOT WORSE THAN THE REDCAP NIGHTCAP. LIQUID DREAMS SQUEEZED FROM THE HEARTS OF FAIRIES, MIXED WITH A SHOT OF RUM, AND DOSED WITH A DRIZZLE OF ASSAMITE JUS; THIS COMPLEX MIXTURE IS ONLY SERVED IN ONE LIBRARY — THE RENOWNED NEST IN NAIROBI, KENYA, WHERE ISANWAYEN PLAYS HOST.

Rewarding Research

We're unashamedly obsessed with knowledge. We hunt it, study it, experiment with it, store it, and occasionally trade it. Contrary to popular opinion, only some of us are fulltime librarians. We're as prone to wanderlust as any vampire; possibly more so. Yes, our eldritch appearances hinder visiting overpopulated areas, but we've never liked crowds. Too much filth and disease.

Kiasyd the world over make expeditions to the darkest tombs and most obscure libraries. Odd little curiosity shops nobody visits are our catnip. (Cats are tidy creatures, by the way. Keep them around your haven, if you don't mind scratched furniture.) There's no crevice we won't probe for hidden knowledge, you understand. We thirst for knowledge.

Our drive to learn and experiment comes from many sources. Some Kiasyd pursue knowledge to become fat spiders in the center of sprawling information networks. Returning to my original point; truth is a dangerous thing, and when you know everyone's secrets, the Jyhad becomes your plaything. Our powers enable us to command others to tell us their most deep-seated fears and discern lies with ease.

Those of us who follow Marconius' lead still desire to create something new, and better than our current form — a supreme life, an apex predator, a being existing in both dreams and wakefulness. We track down myths of chimera — no Tzimisce fleshcrafted dross — and seek to surpass their perfection. In this, we find common cause with the Ravnos and their antitribu. Our association with the Deceivers has increased in recent time.

Ravnos possess a power that should be ours. This isn't accusation of theft as much as statement of fact. The Ravnos can access dreams as if they were tangible; forming illusions with thoughts and fists. Yet they do not know dreams like we know dreams. Nightmares aren't in their blood. It's become a priority among our kind to help Ravnos in need, and aim to receive tutelage in their arts of illusion. Your kinsman Bartholomew theorizes if we could master it, we would elevate ourselves to a new form of being.

One truth that became a lie surrounds our former proficiency in the arts of necromancy. We never became masters of the dark arts, but it was an experiment we chose to pursue in the cause of advancement. Alas, our studies were far from profitable. We drew the beady eye of Giovanni, and our new allies, the Harbingers of Skulls. Threats of violence were leveled, and we were told, in no uncertain terms, it wasn't our province. Bartholomew was the first to concede such accusations were correct; we are not necromancers. Indeed, according to him, we never practiced necromancy. We've denied dabbling in necromancy ever since, and will do so until these lies become truth.

We'll Drink Anything

Don't be mistaken; we don't feed from beggars and drug-addicts. Some experiences aren't worth sampling. For such a low test, you pay some indolent Pander to drink the blood for you, and watch the effects it has on his awareness, form, and mood.

No, we Kiasyd are alchemists, and our bodies are the mixing bowls. Our forms are changed at the point of Embrace, just as Marconius' was from the time he ventured into the Abyss and drank portions of creatures fair and foul. We would change ourselves further. Lupine, changeling, magus, demon — all are palatable. The cocktails we mix are art to behold. We compete regularly with one another on who can craft the next exciting concoction, and record the effects it has on the drinker. The next Great Symposium will be as much about sampling vintages as it will be about comparing books.

There's a school of thought among some Kiasyd that each Clan offers a different taste to the drinker. It's not as simple as Brujah tasting fiery and Ventrue tasting cool; there are pronounced variations in the blood. Several Kiasyd now make a hobby of capturing Cainites just to sample them. A brew of unadulterated Toreador in a glass is very different to a goblet of one part Giovanni, two parts Lasombra. Trust me.

As with many aspects of our bloodline, differences in drinking preferences have caused rifts. A Kiasyd cocktail club in Kraków formally declared war on another in Osaka, not that the two will ever meet. Apparently, their disagreement stems from their differing thoughts on vitae quality from a vampire donor exposed to the sun's rays. Such a minor thing, but we all want to be right.

You may question why—with our interest in experiments and physical transmutation—we do not mix with Tzimisce. It's a good question. The harsh truth is we harbor aversion for Fiends who experiment by adding new orifices, appendages, and similar. It's all so vulgar. Yes, there are rare metamorphosists who impress with transcendency of the physical form. A cabal of Kiasyd has attempted to follow their Path of Metamorphosis, as it does speak to the part of us craving change. You'd do well to study it. Alas, most Tzimisce are simple children who've not yet passed Freud's phallic stage, and so cannot be approached. They have no refinement, and it's offensive to compare their experiments with ours.

I will hear no more on the subject!

From the Outside In

Throughout our meeting, you've been pulling disgusted expressions whenever I speak truths. Truths are, frankly, impolite to air. Our bloodline does not make the mistake of telling other vampires the truth, and risking impropriety. We remain civil, even aloof, when met by other Cainites. It's easier to lie when wearing a mask of politeness and couching dialogue in deference, use of titles, and formalities. We sip vitae from silver chalices, dab our lips with handkerchiefs, and nod sagely as the Archbishop speaks.

Not so when among our own. Airs of graciousness are dropped during the Grand Symposium, for instance. Among our kind, we speak with candor and honesty likely to horrify others. We practice acts I dare say would even make debauched Toreador antitribu blanch.

When we feed in private, the masks drop. I know of a Weirdling cauchemar who creeps into sorority houses to feed. If the grounds fall in the territory of another vampire, he feeds without leaving a trace, except for perhaps pleasant dreams in the mind of the vessel. If the grounds fall outside of said territory, and the Kiasyd knows himself to be alone, the inside of the sorority house becomes the scene from a nightmare. Expect survivors so traumatized they'll never recount the events. They'll likely kill themselves before anything other than screams leave their freshly lipless mouths.

We're not savages or sadists, as a rule. Everything we do is done for a reason: experimentation, pushing our boundaries, drinking blood from a wailing vessel when compared to a weeping one, and so forth. We record the results in our diaries, and when we meet fellow Weirdlings, we share our findings. Some Kiasyd feel the need to remain in touch with their Humanity, and that's acceptable, if limiting. If they can contribute to the greater work of our bloodline while imitating genteel vampires of legend, more power to them.

Personally, I savor the intoxicating taste of fear.

Lyssa's Froth

THE TASTE OF PURIFIED RAGE IS POTENT INDEED, AS LYSSA'S FROTH PROVES. PRIMARILY FORMED OF LUPINE BLOOD — PART-COAGULATED THROUGH SHAKING — INFUSED WITH AN AROMA OF ALMONDS AND BRINE, WITH A SPLASH OF SODA, WHIPPING CREAM, AND SUGAR SYRUP; THIS MULTIFACETED BREW IS BEST CONSUMED FROM A TALL, SILVER CHALICE.

Lies, Damned Lies

The Kiasyd bloodline of Marconius is the only one extant. This is fact, but a hard truth to swallow for those who claim differently. Such liars need to be put down quietly and properly. There are many lies doing the rounds these nights, none of which hold a grain of veracity.

One is Hrotsuitha has returned from the Abyss after a millennium submerged in its tendrils. Supposedly, she's quite insane, violent, and seeks to do irreparable harm to Marconius and his descendants. A few Kiasyd have fallen silent in the last decade, but I attribute this to torpor or a natural desire for seclusion. Boogeymen stalking our dreams and eating us from within is a nonsense tale, designed by Kiasyd with rampant imaginations. Talk of Weirdlings claiming to be of her bloodline is likewise poppycock.

Additionally, there exists the dangerous myth that it's possible to Embrace a changeling. This lie gathered momentum some centuries ago. Falsehoods with enough impetus can become truths — at least until they're quashed. I tell you now; Embraced fae do not become Kiasyd. They die horribly. To concede the possibility is to concede our founder is no more than one of the fair folk, unlucky enough to have been on the end of a Lasombra's fangs. It would also mean everything he ever told us was a lie.

In our case, I prefer the truth with bad intent.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Elysium Mixologist

You're a regular at Elysium, but not as one of the hoi polloi. You tend the bar for kine and Kindred alike, practicing your craft of cocktail mixing to the delight of the punters. An Old Fashioned is nothing. A Ramos Gin Fizz is barely an effort. A Bloody Mary? Now you're getting somewhere. How about a Zillah's Vitae, or Tweaking Blood Doll? Your bizarre appearance is seen as part of the act, as you shake up blood and rum, with blackcurrant and zest of neonate. You may not be a traditional alchemist, but you're sought after for entertaining in multiple domains.

Jekyll / Hyde

The prospect of making your aberrant form something more evolved—greater than a simple vampire—appeals to you on every level. You're unafraid of launching an expedition to hunt lupines or ensnare changelings to get the necessary quantities of their blood, souls, and other parts, just for the purposes of consuming them and recording the effects. You have a laboratory to which you bring back test subjects, either for draining, or to feed them new, dangerous mixtures.

Mr. Sandman

You discreetly maintain an expanding herd of unwitting victims; those incapable of fighting back. You like to whisper in their ears between drinks, use your mental influence to crush their wills, and visit them nightly as a thing from their darkest fantasies. Your growing network of traumatized vessels has become quite the opportunity. Just think of the deals you could make with licks who desire easy prey, or the resource you could offer Kiasyd when the next Great Symposium is hosted in your town.

Merits and Flaws

Prized Collection (1-2pt. Merit)

Kiasyd have appreciation for compilations of books, records, vintages of blood, and other collectable items among Cainites. You possess a collection that may not be worth much (1pt.) or could be worth a lot to the right buyer (2pt.). Importantly, it's a point of interest for any visiting Kiasyd or expert in the field, and they're likely to treat you well just to get access to it.

Alien Perfection (2pt. Merit)

You possess beauty unsettling in its perfection. People stand in awe of your flawless form, while inexplicable nausea

The Necromancy Lie

At the Storyteller's discretion, Kiasyd may take the Discipline of Necromancy instead of Dominate, but in so doing earn the Clan Enmity Flaw (V20, p. 492) twice, both for the Giovanni and Harbingers of Skulls. Freebie points aren't gained for taking these Flaws.

subconsciously creeps up. The difficulty of any Appearance roll is reduced by three. A Stamina roll is required by anyone in your presence for longer than one scene, if this is the first time they've encountered you. Failure drives them away from you with a sickness wracking their body.

Paranormal Link (2pt. Merit)

You're linked to another weird species of the world, and unconsciously find yourself able to understand their parlance, codes, and rituals. Difficulties to decipher the hidden rites and languages of one society (selected when this Merit is purchased) are reduced by three.

Skin of Porcelain (4pt. Merit)

Through concoctions imbibed or by a fluke of your Embrace, you possess a ceramic-like coating to your skin. In order for this to have any effect beyond looking strange, a Stamina roll is required (difficulty 8). Success allows you to convert up to three points of aggravated damage from a fire source to lethal damage before attempts to soak. The hardening dissipates for the remainder of the current story.

Vitae Mutation (5pt. Merit)

You've drank the liquid essence of entities both strange and powerful. Whether the vitae of Methuselahs, the boiling blood of lupines, or bottled dreams of fae, the volume and combination of the brews you've consumed have forever altered you. Each night a Willpower roll is required (difficulty 7) for you to manifest a single point of Auspex, Chimerstry, or Dementation. This point can be added to an existing rating in the Discipline, but disappears the following night.

Lightweight (1pt. Flaw)

Shamefully, you cannot imbibe the blood of any creatures other than mortals, ghouls, and vampires. Whenever you attempt to drink from another entity, you're forced to purge the contents immediately after and gain no sustenance from it.

Illiterate (1-2pt. Flaw)

Perhaps you communicate best through illustration, dance, or impassioned speech; but you can't read or write. This is either a temporary Flaw (1pt.) that can be rectified with a patient teacher, or permanent (2pt.) due to a disability inhibiting your understanding. This Flaw is enough to get you ostracized by others of your bloodline if you do not conceal it.

Refined Palate (1-3pt. Flaw)

Many Kiasyd self-impose feeding restrictions: refusing to feed from the poor and diseased, or even those still wearing skin, or over a certain age. This manifests akin to the Ventrue Clan weakness (V20, p. 73), due to conditioning making any blood outside of the Kiasyd's preference unpalatable. The severity of the Flaw depends on how narrow the restriction is.

Dreadful Mara (4pt. Flaw)

You drank something that still lives within you and hates you, exerting alarming control over your thoughts and actions. Each night, the Storyteller may convert a single rolled success into a 1, potentially leading to a botch. At the Storyteller's discretion, the entity may also whisper advice or insults, which can lead to increased difficulty during attempts to concentrate.

Combination Disciplines

Dreamstalker (Dominate ••, Mytherceria •)

Weirdlings enjoy exerting control over their victims, even in dreams. A Kiasyd who whispers into the ear of an unconscious victim may implant fantastic or frightening thoughts that remain with the sleeper after waking. The dreams Kiasyd insert in victims' minds can be anything from seemingly disparate elements (you will repeatedly see eagles and pink umbrellas) to intact narratives (you will dream of your husband chasing you around town with an axe). Kiasyd have been known to use this power to compel victims to react to stimuli planted in their path, seeing features from their dreams as symbols of good luck, or potential disaster.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Expression (difficulty the victim's current temporary Willpower rating) as she commands the sleeper to dream whatever elements she narrates. The effect manifests in the victim's behaviors once woken, effecting concentration (difficulty of extended actions increases by two) and potentially stimulating the victim in a positive (the victim responds favorably to subjects from his dream) or negative way (the victim must make a Willpower roll to remain in the presence of what he dreamt) for a duration dependent on the number of successes achieved by the player.

Successes	Result
1 success	One turn
2 successes	One hour
3 successes	One night
4 successes	One week
5+ successes	One month

This power costs 9 experience points to learn.

Sacrifice to Nightmare (Mytherceria ••••, Obtenebration •••)

Kiasyd who know their connection to the Abyss also know it's necessary to keep the entities within content, and doing so occasionally requires a sacrifice. Pragmatic Weirdlings reason "If we need to sacrifice lives, why not the lives of those we hate?"

After painting the interior walls of a pitch-black chamber with fae sigils, the Kiasyd seals a sacrifice inside the room. Within seconds, the tentacles and snapping jaws of the Abyss reach through, and consume whatever offering has been provided. Those schooled in Abyss Mysticism believe the nightmare entity to be a part of the summoner, as it ceases to exist if it leaves the chamber emblazoned with the Kiasyd's sigils and blood.

Sacrifices who survive over a minute in the chamber are supposedly given the honored treatment of being diablerized by Kiasyd without, but Weirdlings sniff at such vulgar claims.

System: The vampire must inscribe a Chanjelin Ward (V20, p. 455) within a room, where it has the same effects as usual. The Kiasyd must then spend two blood points to summon a tangible nightmare from the Abyss before exiting the room, leaving her sacrifice behind. The nightmare is a tentacled, many-mawed creature, which cannot exist outside the sacrificial chamber for longer than a single minute.

Kiasyd Alchemy

Until now, the Kiasyd practice of alchemy has resulted in a bevy of flavors, if not successful functions. Lately, however, some of their bizarre mixtures have begun to alter the forms and powers of those who drink them. Some claim this is due to the awakening of Hrotsuitha, while others mundanely state after a near millennium of research, it would be more surprising if nothing had been achieved.

At Storyteller discretion, Kiasyd cocktails may convey temporary benefits, such as increased Strength or points of Protean through consumption of a werewolf-based drink, greater affinity for Thaumaturgy or astral projection during the day by drinking the blood of magi, and temporary immunity to the sun's rays or use of Chimerstry through drinking from fairies.

Such powers should come at a cost, however. Increased likelihood of frenzy, becoming subject to bizarre coincidences when using Masquerade-violating Disciplines, or being hunted by illusionary entities are all possible penalties for indulging in the macabre field of blood alchemy.

The nightmare's four independent tentacles each deal lethal (the Kiasyd's Strength +1) damage through constriction, which can be resisted with an opposed Strength roll (difficulty 6 for each tentacle). The nightmare's mouth deals aggravated (the Kiasyd's Strength +2) damage after successfully grappling the sacrifice with its tentacles.

The nightmare has equal health levels and resistances to the summoner, who can soak damage with Stamina and Fortitude. Damage inflicted on the nightmare does not affect the summoner.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

MARK
KELLY
16

Nagaraja

"When the food runs out, the family reunion is over. It's cool that out of all my relatives, I'm the only cannibal."

– Jarod Kintz, *This Book Has No Title*

Waiting For That Day

Eric laid on the metal embalming table for another day. The parts where his body had already warmed the metal were okay, but the slightest movement set ripples of cold through his body. Not that he could truly move. Only phantom limbs remained at this stage of his kidnapping, so the handcuffs weren't necessary to restrain him. Pain was almost nonexistent, as he was hooked into several machines whose faint bleeps and bloops served as the constant reminder that he was still alive. And still waiting. His eyes were blindfolded, so he was blind as well as hoarse – his voice was left ragged after screaming for help for hours on end when he first got here.

The door rustled and scraped against the cement as it opened. The monster had returned. Was it possible today was the day, that fateful time when the man would be put out of his misery? It was all he hoped for nowadays. Listening to the monster's footsteps, Eric heard him pass by in favor of one of his other victims kept in this dungeon. He couldn't hold back a muttered "Please kill me."

The chuckle the monster let out almost seemed human. It spoke with a human's voice well enough when it lured him into its clutches, but it let go of all the theatrics once it had him. To think he once found the monster attractive.

Hearing the screams of one of the other victims as the monster no doubt cut into their limbs to take them to god-knows-where and do god-knows-what with them, he tried once more. "Kill me now. Please!"

The monster laughed again and shuffled its feet on its way toward Eric. It then pinched the edge of his blindfold and lifted it slightly, allowing Eric to see the inhuman visage with red eyes and rows of razor-sharp teeth

covered in blood. This was the beast that had been eating him piece by piece for weeks.

It spoke. "Do you really want to die? Do you mortals not cling to life with every last breath?"

He didn't hesitate. "Yes! Please! Do—" He was cut off by a fist being plunged into his gut and twisting his organs, killing him.

Sometime later, Eric awoke again. He was still in that horrific room and he felt his body being pulled toward... the monster. What was this? Death was supposed to be his release, but it seemed it was only another prison.

The monster bared its blood-covered teeth. "So, now that you're dead, I think I'll begin with your legs again."

A True Telling

There was once a time when the children of Caine bit at each other's throats and sucked the blood so deep that they drained personalities, smiles, and dreams. Some yearned for such power and others wished it away, but everyone who came to the curse were born of another's selfishness and desire. Each sire wanted a companion, a slave, or even just food, but it was their Blood who drove them and nothing else.

We of the Nagaraja have what no Bloodline has: a higher purpose. To rule the night like some Prince isn't what we strive for. Running around with our friends in blood-crazed parties to devour anyone in our way has never been a thing with us. Not even a little bit. No, our kind are looking beyond this world and into the next. We have gifts no other Kindred possess, and certain trials in our existences we alone must bear.

Let me introduce you to what the Nagaraja really are, beyond what you've heard from conceited harpies or wayward pack priests. Ours is a sacred birthright, though few are truly worthy of what we possess. I could spout stories of little girls and snakes and churches, but I'll keep it simple for you.

Our Birth

Our kind were once death mages in the ancient days of Enoch, necromancers of the highest caliber who delved into the mysteries of the barriers between life and death. They were pioneers in their field, many of whom lived among Cainites in the first Necropolis. When the fall of that great place came and the Kindred fractured, our people knew it was only a matter of time before chaos would destroy everything. A war had started, and the necromancers knew they had to play their part if there was to be order in the world which was to follow.

They obtained a sample of Cainite blood from the strongest they could find among the residents of Enoch, and enacted blood rites to make themselves into beings who were possessed of both life and death, the only type of creature who could live within Enoch. Within this ritual, they also crafted protections that kept them safe within the city. We could walk on ground known to swallow the wicked whole. Air that was cool to our skin burned anyone else, erupting from their lungs to their skin. Even the ghosts who resided there beside the Cainites became cordial and would bend over backwards to aid us.

Let me stop you before you ask, since it's the first question most pose when hearing how we came to be. Is it really important which Clan's blood was used to create the Nagaraja? I know of a few it couldn't have been from, but the staggering number of Clans they had access to in those times tells us — or me at least — that there really isn't any way of knowing. Of course, just ask any other Kindred and they'll gladly tell you that we are Brujah bastards or the corrupt by-product of a Cappadocian or whatever. Some even say that some Nagaraja went on to create the Samedi in our image. Like I said — everyone's got an opinion.

One thing I do know, however, is that even though some Kindred speculate the Tremere were the first mages to play with mixing magic and vitae, that is far from the truth. We were the first, but we don't pretend like it's a big secret and then let everyone know about it. To be honest, we're much happier without all the attention. We have other business to attend to.

Keepers of Enoch

Which brings me back to Enoch. The Nagaraja submitted themselves to the rulers of Enoch, wanting only to serve and preserve what had been built there. We became the tenders of the gardens of the dead and the librarians of the underworld relics, as the secrets held within would only go on to strengthen us. Most of all, our kind became the warriors who defended the Necropolis from the likes of those who would bring it ruin. This included a collection of powerful spectres, necromantic mages who hoped to break in and steal the city's secrets and, most of all, the Followers of Set.

One would think that a city of the dead found only in the lost corners of the maze in the land of death which slowly kills anyone who enters its borders wouldn't be in need of protection. And yet, the wars that came after the loss of so many antediluvians brought immeasurable ruin to all realms of reality. To allow anyone to take the city from the Nagaraja would mean we no longer had a hand in what the apocalypse will look like. That is Enoch's true purpose, you know: to bring about the end of all things one day.

In order to keep control, more of our bloodline were required. Our strongest necromancers stayed behind to hold down the fort, while the more adventurous of us traveled the world in search of those who also sought true purpose. Most of us arrived in what became the Middle East and Asia, and altered our forms to blend in with the populace. New childer were sent back to Enoch after they completed the proper training to bolster the city's defenses.

Not all of our new creations were deemed worthy to enter the great Necropolis, however, so some Nagaraja were simply set upon the world. Not without recitations over their tongues to keep them from sharing our secrets with those outside the bloodline, mind you. We can't let our lessons be sold to the highest bidder. We're not Giovanni, after all.

It wasn't too long before the Nagaraja outnumbered all other Kindred and we were able to take charge of Enoch. We held the keys to the city and the other Kindred knew it, so we used that to our advantage.

Hunter Turned Prey

The power we held over the dead and the entrance to Enoch did nothing to make the other Kindred like us. While the Camarilla made alliances and created the Masquerade in hopes of hiding from the pitchforks and torches, they also sought to snuff out those vampires they deemed

undesirable. It didn't help that we have an appetite for flesh instead of blood. This has always made our kind easier to spot. The Camarilla couldn't tolerate this, and it hired assassins of all kinds, including many Assamites, to kill the Nagaraja.

Our wisest did their best to hide amongst societies where eating human flesh was already an accepted behavior: obscure tribes or fringe religions where eating the organs of one's enemies was believed to grant strength. Those caught in more civilized environments without a meticulous mind were often captured and killed simply for existing. The assassins, with help from conscripted necromancers, turned the ghosts we once controlled on us or tainted our meat supply to weaken us and making us easier to slaughter. While the latter breaks the Masquerade on many levels, some went to great lengths to kill us.

The Assamites became one of our most feared Clans, as they got better as killing us every time. There is a measure of respect extended to their Clan, however, as they killed us for a higher purpose. You have to admire that kind of zeal, right? The Followers of Set also jumped on the bandwagon, seeing this as their chance to break our numbers in hopes of prying the secrets of Enoch from our tongues. We took our rituals to the grave, however, and not one secret passed our lips. The Followers of Set stand for nothing except obtaining power. They care for nothing, seek not to help anyone else, and even turn on their own Clan when it suits them.

For those of us that survived, we had few options. Enoch was a sanctuary for those lucky enough to be invited, but the rest had to learn how to exist with humans and just about every other Kindred out to destroy us. Of course, the ones who hunted us did a good job with propaganda to give us the reputation we hold very dear today: demons who pretend to be Kindred, and can be spotted by the sharpness of our teeth and the craving for flesh. The idea that we eat Kindred flesh in addition to human meat spread, though the idea makes me nauseous.

As time passed on, we found ways to hide the deaths we left in our wake. The most popular was to get involved with the wars going on around the globe during any given century. Few question when pieces of their enemies turn up missing. I myself served in both the First Crusade and World War II, though it doesn't matter which side I was on. It would only serve to distract from the greater point: If you view us as pests, we'll survive as only pests can. We will follow in the wake of mortal wrongdoing, where our actions are veiled behind humanity's atrocities.

Fall of Enoch

It was around 1600 CE that a terrible maelstrom struck the underworld. It annihilated the various ghosts who existed there, and shook the pillars of Enoch to its core. Even with the special protections built into our blood, we lost almost all of our kind, and our bodies were ripped to pieces.

This meant we were decimated, reduced to a fraction of what our original numbers were. Worse yet, many of the oldest and most powerful rituals were lost in the ancient libraries of Enoch. Our bloodline became a herd of beasts simply trying to survive, and very few of us had any real knowledge of Enoch left. Even if there was an Enoch to return to, only a few Nagaraja knew its real location. I say real location, because our enemies created false Necropoli to lure us and butcher those who came in search of our birthright.

Having lost our true purpose, too many of us fell to our basest desires for flesh and became the monsters other Kindred believed us to be. The destruction of our home drove us to embrace the beast in many cases, and to become purely nihilistic in others. We came to be known as Flesh-Eaters; an overly simplistic phrase to describe a complex ritual of consuming part of one's soul through the physical shell holding it within. It became something we couldn't stop doing, to the point that without the flesh we would wither away and die.

Could you blame us? Everything the Nagaraja built to sustain ourselves and help usher in the next phase of Gehenna on our terms was gone. Survival took a primary position, and we started to repopulate our bloodline. The Nagaraja left the dreams of Gehenna and Enoch behind, becoming hardened and deadlier in the process.

Modern Nagaraja

As I mentioned before, centuries were spent hiding among the living monsters that humanity has nurtured into our camouflage. Some Nagaraja think of Embracing these talented folks and making them like us, but I think that can be a mistake. I remember a young knight I fought beside during the Crusades who brought his favorite shield to every battle. He survived for years because of it. Then he got the brilliant idea to make his shield part of him converting the metal into a fine breastplate. The next battle we waged — I believe it was during the march to Jerusalem — he went into the fray with a different, less refined shield and soon discovered the error in his choice. When his shield was damaged beyond use, he took a sword through his breastplate. The moral of the story? If you have a sturdy and useful shield, don't bother trying to make it into something else.

Which brings us to the present, where you have the pleasure of my company for a short while. What was once

a collection of necromancers defending a holy city against overwhelming odds has become a bloodline of Kindred who have adapted to be the perfect killers. It was a necessity for us. Nagaraja who second guess their position in this world as a monster, even to other Kindred, will find themselves meeting a Final Death.

Blood vs. Flesh

The main difference between us and other Kindred is that they drink only blood from their victims, while the Nagaraja must consume flesh as well. Hence our nickname, the aptly termed Flesh-Eaters. It's like the other Kindred asked their 4-year-old niece to give us a name, but I digress. There are upsides and downsides to our unique condition.

To other vampires, the blood is the only thing on their minds. They are parasites and pests. A true predator hunts their prey and devours them inside and out, ripping flash from bone and bathing in the remains as it suits us. That is what a kill is like for a Nagaraja. Not a sip of blood in a back room of a night club with no one knowing the wiser, like other cowards out there that fancy themselves killers.

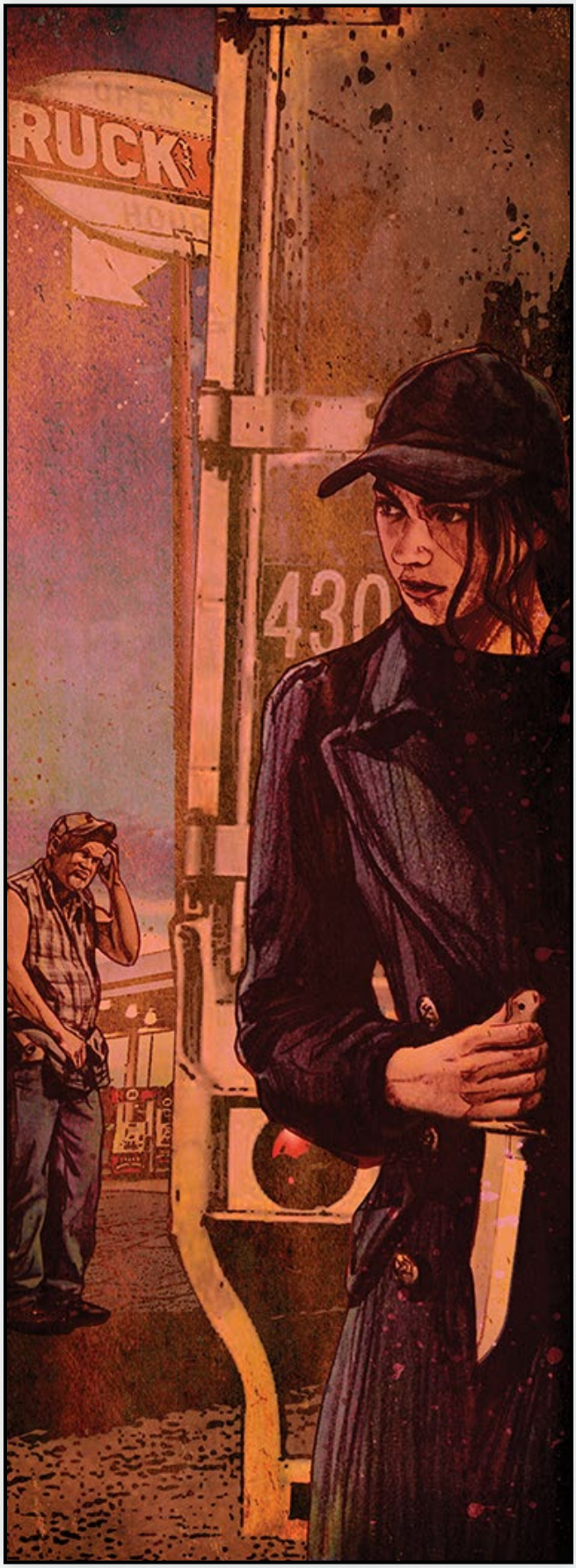
Look at my teeth. These are nothing less than the tools of a predator, as if we are specifically designed for this kind of unlife. Each tooth is a razor to rip viscera from bone and rend the flesh for our palates. I've even heard of some Nagaraja who eat blood, flesh, and bone together.

Oh, we refer to the flesh we consume as Viscus. Most vampires see devouring flesh as something that makes us lesser, which is certainly not the case. The flesh is a supernatural element created by the transubstantiation of our hunger, in the same way that the blood other vampires drink is more than just A positive. Likewise, it should give you the idea that the Nagaraja respect our prey and the sustenance they provide. It's not just meat, it's Viscus, the most precious flesh and organs in existence, because it keeps us alive for another day.

Living as a Serial Killer

Now take a moment to picture what it's like to be a Nagaraja. You are a monster living on the outskirts of humanity's established world. You are an outcast from other Kindred, so you always have to cover your tracks and watch your back. Your fangs are overgrown and obvious, so you rarely speak unless necessary. You've learned how to blend into your environment and avoid detection above all else.

Outcast, demonized, quiet, and invisible. A perfect recipe for breeding killers who are really good at what they do. It takes ingenuity to become as good as we have. Today we



number in the hundreds, far below what other Clans tout as their badge of superiority, but with smaller numbers we can make moves with much less focus put on us. Seeing as we began with only a handful and have had to contend with being hunted, I think those are commendable numbers.

Some of us have come to terms with their monstrous sides and hide on the outskirts of cities, feasting on the occasional traveler but otherwise staying away from people. Most necessities can be ordered via the internet now, so interaction with mortals is really unnecessary except for when it's time to eat. One or two missing persons can go by without a blink. Depending on the city, several hundred is dismissible by the authorities who don't need the extra paperwork.

Wise Nagaraja have created dungeons, places to eat in silence. These are preferably soundproof and easy to clean, with plastic sheet wrap or built-in drainage for the blood that spills. To the laymen, dungeons resemble slaughter houses, but the human animal often requires special tools. Always having duct tape and plastic zip ties on hand can keep a Nagaraja alive. No matter where Kindred end up on the food pyramid, humans fight back with alarming regularity. With no Kiss to lull our prey, tranquilizers work as a suitable replacement.

Murderer Conventions

Our existence is, by necessity, a solitary one. There's just no way to incorporate any kind of normal life of friends and family when you're a monster. A few of us have tried to rope in ghosts as companions, but even they grow scarce when our hunger overtakes us and we rip into their ectoplasm just as easily as a human's flesh. We eat everything and anything we can get out hands on, after all.

Living in such a way can be damaging to the mental state of even the most stable Nagaraja, however, which is why we cling to others within our bloodline. About every decade or so, as many Nagaraja as we can contact gather in a strange… well, I call them murderer conventions. Others call them silent conclaves, but it never seemed to capture what it was like to attend one of these surreal events. The strongest among our bloodline keep the younger Nagaraja up to date on our biggest threats. Young Nagaraja catch our elders up on the latest technological advancements that can help us survive. I've been to six of these conventions, and each one grows larger and larger. Of course, by "large" I mean it started off with around ten Nagaraja and today it's closer to seventy-five. Each of us is encouraged to bring an offering to share and help stave off the amount of hunting necessary to sustain such a large group. This combined with the fact that we always pick a different city for each of these larger gatherings, allows us to avoid the police (or other Kindred) from picking up any kind of scent.

The logistics behind silent conclaves with more than a handful Nagaraja isn't as simple as one might think, and usually involves a collective effort of all attendees. Ghouls with connections in real estate find homes for rent large enough to hold the event, and the Nagaraja who live in the hosting town painstakingly prepare the neighborhood for others' arrival. This includes feasting on nosy neighbors and making ghouls of the local security agencies. It can take months to prepare for this sort of event, and missing one detail can be devastating.

We had an incident like this occur at the last gathering in Detroit, where a random coterie of Brujah decided to enter the convention in some sort of macho display. Seeing how many of us there were, the Brujah quickly turned to run, but it was over for them the moment they stepped across the doorway. We make sure to avoid that city now, as I'm sure word of Nagaraja has spread. No need to go looking for trouble.

The Followers of Set

Make no mistake… there is no Clan more an enemy to the Nagaraja than the Followers of Set. Regardless of whether a sire sticks around to teach that to their childer, it is a deep-rooted urge that each of us has to rid the world of any Setite. They are liars, cheats, and swindlers, and are extremely proud of it. A Nagaraja's blood boils in their presence, though the truly gifted can hold themselves back from annihilating their enemy on sight. As the elders tell it, the entire purpose our bloodline was created was to rid the world (the current one or the afterlife, whichever you prefer) of these wretched creatures and everything they stand for.

Seems during the modern nights, the Followers of Set have burned almost as many bridges as we have. They're allowed more freedom of movement, but a wise Kindred won't believe a word they say, regardless of how well they sell their snake oil.

The True Black Hand

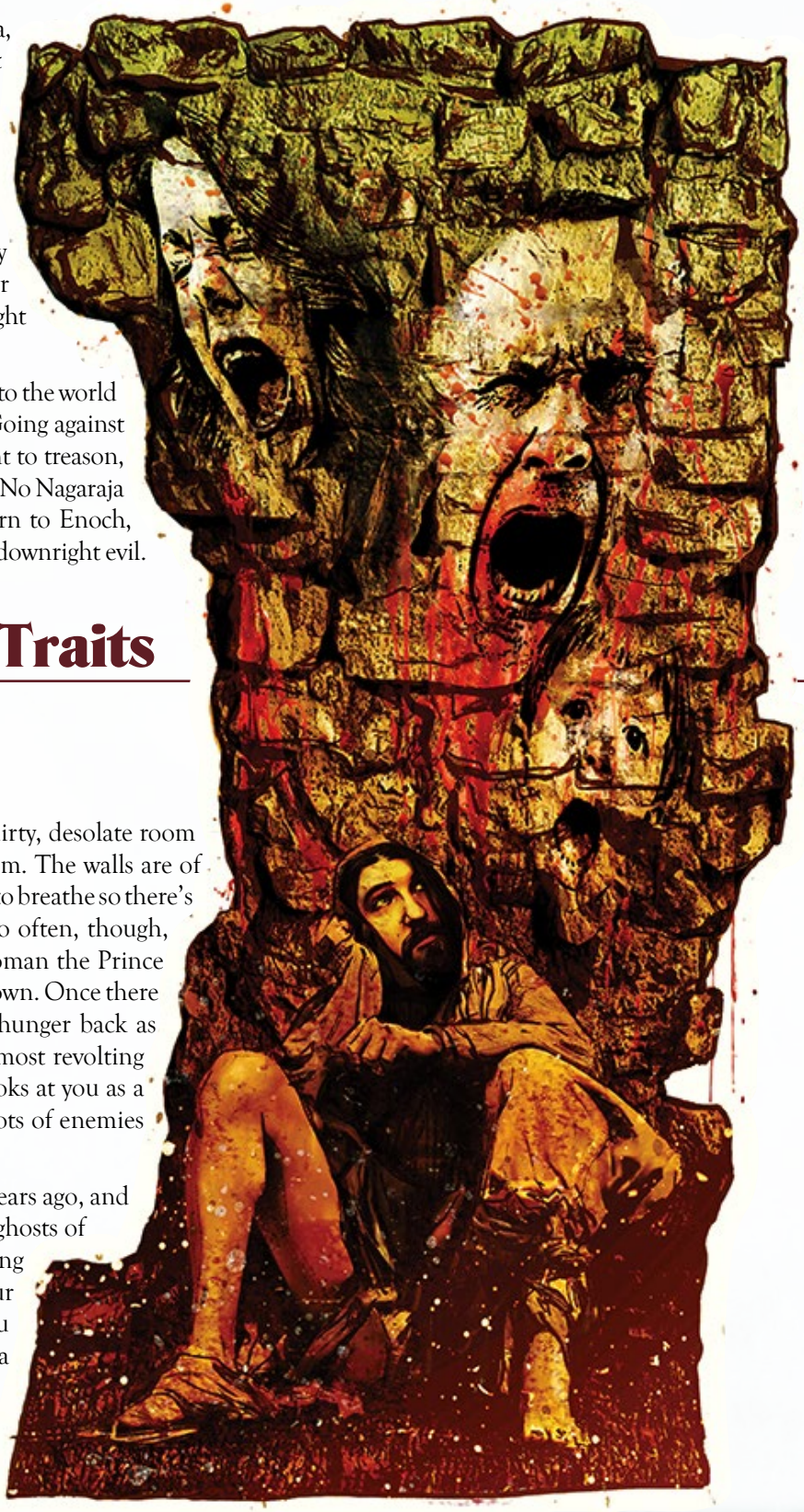
The silent conclaves are good for a number of things, but none more than the ability to speak with our elders who apparently still serve the True Black Hand. They say there is a way back to Enoch and some of them have left their depressing, solitary existence to go serve that great purpose I was speaking of before.

I know what you're thinking… why am I here talking to you instead of following my betters into the void? That's an easy

answer: I like freedom too much. Those who venture to Enoch don't often come back, and when they do, they are never the same as they were before. I'm pretty sure they do an indoctrination of each Nagaraja as they enter Enoch to make them more complacent to the orders they receive. That is certainly not the kind of thing I'm looking for in my life. Here, I have all the blood and flesh I could hope for, as well as the constant thrill of the chase — even if sometimes I'm the prey.

Whenever we sire another Nagaraja, we give them the choice. It is said that the True Black Hand and our ancestors mixed in a homing sense with our curse. That means, any Nagaraja, even one who's never visited Enoch, need only enter the land of the dead and walk for three days to find the ancient city. Any Nagaraja who keeps this fact from their childer is quickly tracked down and brought to Final Death.

You see, our kind was only released into the world to create more and send them home. Going against such an intrinsic mandate is paramount to treason, and few can be forgiven for such a deed. No Nagaraja is penalized if they choose not to return to Enoch, but robbing someone of their choice is downright evil.



Character and Traits

Concepts

Prince's Pet

There's nothing to look at in your dirty, desolate room except the scatterings of your last victim. The walls are of the strongest stone and you don't need to breathe so there's only the most stagnant of air. Every so often, though, the ceiling opens up and a man or woman the Prince and his brood need rid of is dropped down. Once there was even a child, and you held your hunger back as long as you could before making the most revolting of choices. In every way, the Prince looks at you as a convenient garbage disposal. He has lots of enemies and you have an insatiable yearning.

You were captured months or even years ago, and now your existence is lonely. Friendly ghosts of those you devoured have been helping you, however, to find ways out of your prison. Soon, they'll be able to help you escape and out the Prince for harboring a Nagaraja. Taking the Prince's reputation down a peg and getting out in one fail swoop would be a wonderful moment. You must plan.

Recruiter

You're a people person. You can spot someone who would make a perfect Nagaraja, choose the best time to Embrace them, and then send them to Enoch for "processing" like no other. In fact, you're one of the best. Sometimes all it requires is a cup of coffee and a passionate plea of what it means to be in control of the end of all existence. Others, you need to embrace first and then espouse the virtues of serving the True Black Hand.

Even to you, the True Black Hand is a mystery, but they told you to recruit others and you've seen their reach clearly enough that you know refusal is not an option. After you've recruited enough soldiers, they'll even let you come to Enoch. They haven't exactly given a quota, but you'll know you've reached it when one of them comes for you and says it's time to come home.

The Snitch

Surviving has a lot to do with the tools at one's disposal. Nagaraja are supposed to meet Final Death on sight, killed for the monsters they are, but you've figured out a way to stay alive... information. Whether its data straight from the lips of victims hoping to distract you from your hunger or whispers from your ghostly servants who follow leads, you're the one that other Kindred go to when they need to know what's going on. Killing you would be like destroying a precious database with no backup.

You still don't have the luxury of operating in the complete open. You have a little den in the seediest part of the town, far from the prying eyes of those who might not look kindly on a Nagaraja. When someone needs you, they know how to get ahold of you by leaving a message with the desk clerk of a nearby, by-the-hour motel. They know you're the one in control; they come to you, you don't go to them. Things stay copacetic that way.

Merits and Flaws

Extra Sharp (2pt. Merit)

All Nagaraja already have sharpened fangs for the purposes of cutting into flesh with ease. A character with this Merit, however, has additional rows of fangs, similar to a shark, each one poised to inflict the most pain possible. Instead of dealing 1 unsoakable lethal damage per bite, they deal 2 lethal instead. Some Nagaraja like this gift since it makes their victims stop squirming much quicker. Others fear it creates a connection to the painful bite of the Giovanni, and may see Nagaraja with this Merit almost as outsiders.

Speed Eater (2pt. or 4pt. Merit)

The vampire's jaws have been strengthened to allow for faster devouring of one's prey. For 2 points, he can devour 2 blood points worth of flesh per minute, or he may devour 3 blood points worth for 4 points. Must have at least Stamina 3 in order to gain this Merit. Otherwise, his undead form cannot support the influx of blood and viscera at such a fast pace.

Wolverine's Palate (3pt. Merit)

Though many do not know this, the dreaded wolverine is one of only a few creatures in the world that can eat their prey entirely, whether larger or smaller. The Nagaraja with this Merit has the ability to eat bone just as easily as flesh, sapping even more spiritual essence from her victim and converting it to blood points. With one bite, she can cut through flesh and bone and swallow it all at once with no ill effect. This also means she may gain up to 5 additional blood points from a body by consuming the bones.

The Largest Maw (2pt. Flaw)

Due to the size of the Nagaraja's shark-like rows of teeth, they find it hard to communicate verbally. Instead, she speaks through pools of spit and sometimes bites her own teeth in the process. This makes them quieter than other Nagaraja, but can also affect situations where clear speech is mandatory, such as when giving speeches or reciting delicate rituals. All difficulties for rolls where speech is a factor are raised by +2.

Body Trail (4pt. Flaw)

Whether the Nagaraja is just too sloppy and prone to overlooking details during her kills or she is especially fond of leaving a signature for every kill to send a message to others, others can use this to track her down. Each time there are items at a scene of a crime that could link directly back the Nagaraja, causing her to always look over her shoulder. The police are always one step away from busting her, or the Camarilla's assassins have her in their sights. In any case, leaving a trail is a terrible thing. For every person they kill during a single story, the difficulty to Survival checks for tracking are reduced by 1. This penalty resets at the beginning of a new story... if they survive to the next story, that is.

Combo Disciplines

Soul Separation (Vitreous Path •••, Auspex ••••)

A few Nagaraja have the ability to link their souls with another through what some call control of their unholy presence. In truth, it is more about knowing another's

Soul Separation Effects

No successes	The victim's soul remains unmoved; no effect.
1 success	The victim's soul is stirred, but not removed. This harms the target's spiritual alignment, raising the difficulty of their next check by +2.
2 successes	The Nagaraja shoves the target's soul out of their body, tethered close by. This state lasts for 2 turns, during which the target cannot move more than 10 feet/three meters from their corporeal form. Some vampires use this power to easily grab hold of a resistant target and begin feeding, the Kiss having taken hold of the victim by the time they return to their body.
3 successes	The soul of the target is momentarily stripped from their body, as the vampire takes a single bite to gain 3 blood points from the soul before it is returned. The victim suffers damage and a -2 penalty to their next dice pool.
4 successes	The victim's soul is ripped from their physical form and fly straight into the Nagaraja's wide-open, expanding maw, allowing him to devour the soul whole. As a result, they gain 6 blood points instantly, and the victim's body falls to the ground, limp and lifeless.
5 successes	Same as 4 successes, but they now gain 10 blood points, digesting the victim's soul much easier.

soul intimately through the use of Auspex that makes the vampire truly dangerous. Reaching out with his mind and spirit to his victim's soul, the vampire may draw it out and devour it the same as any other spirit. Victims who have survived such a trauma say it is truly an out of body experience or a forced astral projection. They feel like they could go anywhere or do anything, completely free of their corporeal form, but are instead uncontrollably drawn into the Nagaraja's jaws to be devoured. It is a nightmare of unparalleled proportions, often scarring the victim mentally.

System: The player spends 1 Willpower and rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 7) against the target's Willpower (difficulty 6). Each success the target rolls cancels out one from the player's roll. Leftover successes are compared to the table above.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

Unseen Spirit (Vitreous Path ••, Obfuscate ••)

Becoming invisible to the living world is something many Kindred know how to do, but the Nagaraja go one step further. They use their expertise with ghostly energies to make themselves invisible even to those ghosts and spirits who can usually see them. It makes it easier for them walk through the lands of the dead unharmed or sneak up on unsuspecting ghosts for them to devour and replenish their power.

System: The vampire rolls Stamina + Empathy (difficulty 6). Similar to Unseen Presence, the character remains invisible unless they speak, attack, or draw undue attention. However, the addition of ghostly emanation makes this process even easier. He may perform one act that may draw attention to him per success on their activation check before their invisibility is lifted. This makes the Discipline much more forgiving for those not already proficient in stealthy operations, which describes many Nagaraja in their early nights. The character's environment isn't affected, however; knocking over a vase or smashing a window is obvious to any onlooker, though the observer won't know what made those things occur.

This power costs eight experience points to learn.

MARK
KELLY
16

SALUBRI

"Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity."

— Hippocrates

EYES

Eric Rodriguez was dying, and the fever couldn't stop him from realizing it. The nurses who came all had the same eyes: gray in the flickering lights, a color that looked like pity, fear, and duty. The doctors who looked over him had soft eyes and softer voices. One said it was hemorrhagic fever, probably Ebola. Quarantine was why his family couldn't see him, and the doctors said they were sorry, this time with sad eyes. Eric watched the plastic-covered ceiling of the clean room, condensation collecting on the inside, a soft and infrequent rainfall made from his poisoned sweat. He imagined he could feel his blood carrying sickness throughout his body.

The cheap lights flickered, or maybe Eric's own pained eyes closed a moment. There were shadows in the hot hospital room, and then there was a man and a woman, though the sterile plastic drapes remained undisturbed. The woman was pensive, wearing a faded turtleneck and ragged skirt – maybe fashionably, maybe necessarily. She had a small scar in the middle of her forehead. The man Eric knew from childhood. The fluorescent lights of the hospital cast a nasty pallor over both.

"Tio Matt?" Eric mumbled. Uncle Matt had been a distant fixture all his life, visiting infrequently but sending regular birthday cards bulging with cash. His father and blood uncle referred to Matt as uncle as well. Once, drunk, they had mentioned knowing from Matt in their youth, though the next day was nothing but denials.

A bit of blood rolled down Eric's cheek like a tear. He smelled the coppery tang. Matt spread his hands, an odd gesture of helplessness from one unaccustomed to it. "I cannot permit him to die," he said, in a tone that meant, "please don't let him."

"I won't," said the woman, answering his intent instead of his words. She was paler than Matt, maybe twenty-two.

"Do you know how many descendants of Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph still live within the borders of Mexico?" Matt said, his attitude flaswing from pleading to pride. "All of them struck down by this vile disease. It is deliberate, a strike against me." There was a clicking sound from his mouth, and Matt's jaw hung slightly open.

"Be calm," said the woman, her gaze placid. Remarkably, the same placidity overtook Matt, and he straightened his jacket. "Yes, the Archbishop has discovered your preference for Hapsburg blood. Yes, he has infected your herd. We can help each other, senor."

"You promised to heal him."

"And I will," she said, eyes confident. "It is my purpose to fulfill, if you keep to our bargain."

"Agreed," Eric's tio Matt said. "You as guest in my home for the year, and all I know of Adonai's brood."

"He won't remember this?"

"He never has."

The eyes! Eric thought, and there they were, different from all the others, purple and lambent and loving. The eyes all others had on both sides of her nose, and a third yawning wide upon her forehead, focusing on him with an iris the color of lilac. Before Eric could panic, slick red light washed over him.

The burning sensation vanished.

THE LAMB OF CAINE

I see my patron has betrayed our agreement of secrecy, though in this case I agree with his judgment that another of my Clan deserves counsel. I say Clan, not bloodline, for our history traces back to the progenitors, grandchilder of Caine. Our history is higher and nobler than Ventrue or Lasombra or Tzimisce, for what nobility did they show us when the Usurper Tremere took our heart's blood?

My tattoos? This is ta moko, childe, not some Clan marking. I was Maori before I was Salubri, though my sire was an Englishman sleeping in the hold of James Cook's Endeavor, and I honor him by bearing his name after a fashion. But my face serves to illustrate a point: we do not prey upon the kine as our kindred do. We take of their blood even as we are among them, like the shepherd lives among the flock. Our kine are kept healthy and clean, while ensuring our kindred remain separate from them.

The title of bloodline is from those who would deny our history and condemn us to dust. Indeed, some deem it our purpose to die, to show the Kindred what comes of those too pure and noble for this existence of sin and spite. They claim it the right and privilege of vampires to prey upon humanity, even as their short-sightedness threatens their own existence. Our fall heralds Gehenna, the progenitors rising up to consume us all.

Perhaps they are right, but while we may die quietly, we will not die easily.

THE FIRST NIGHTS

The others may dress it up as they like, but the facts are plain, and underneath our poetry and platitudes we are a practical Clan: Caine cursed each of the Third Generation in turn, condemning them to the embodiment of their worst excesses. Condemning all, save one: gentle Saulot, Embraced by Enoch, most-beloved grandchilde of Caine. Saulot was spared, not for the prophetic gifts he showed, nor for his skill at healing. He spared Saulot because our progenitor was Caine's hope of peace, of staving off the curses levied upon him by God and Kindred alike. Saulot would shepherd the promise of Golconda, the hope of redemption.

Perhaps that is why they called us shepherds in the Second City, for our nature tends towards care of the mortal flock. I prefer to think it was because the Wanderer's nature reminded Caine so much of Abel, noble and pure. In many ways, we are defined as a Clan by Saulot's nature and his mythic history, moreso than any other. We trace the three ways of our Clan from the childer Saulot Embraced during the traumatic or defining points of his unlife. Our Healers descend from Rayzeel, mistress of song and herb, Saulot's life before the Embrace. Our Warriors descend from Samiel, master of the fire that cleanses and twin to Rayzeel. And the Watchers, well…if the rumors I heard of them in Aotearoa are true, they descend from Saulot's time as a student and observer, which is fitting enough.

Even after the Embrace, Saulot sought to keep the peace between his feuding kin. He Embraced progeny rarely, instructing them to tend to those ravaged by his siblings, keeping mortals quiescent and hale in the face of immortal predation. He soothed the madness of Malkav with gentle music and brotherly caresses, checked the wickedness of Set with subtle undermining and ameliorating addiction. It was only by the Wanderer's efforts that the Second City lasted as long as it did. When Caine returned to judge the Third Generation, he specifically saved Saulot from his judgment, naming our progenitor the guardian of the angel Raphael's promise: that salvation would never be denied to Caine's brood.

A KINDRED OF THE EAST

Yet Saulot had never himself achieved Golconda, the fabled state of grace despite the Curse of Caine. He walked what would become the first Silk Road, taking a number of mortal followers (but no progeny) with him into the deep night. You might've heard of them; ancient records from the Pamir Mountains describe foreigners of great height and fair tresses, and the Tarim Basin mummies in the Xinjiang museum have red hair.

Immortal legendry picks up where archaeology leaves off. What little mythos we've integrated from sources east of the Indus describes Zao-lat as a trickster from the West, stealing enlightenment from the greatest philosophers amongst the Ten Thousand Demons. He was expelled for his arrogance, leaving two of his followers behind, a scholar and a thief, to eternally bedevil the Kindred there.

That's the story, anyway, as it came back to us from laughing Ravnos and our limited contact with the Wu Zao, the Salubri the Progenitor left in the East. The Clan only knew that Saulot returned to the City having found what he sought, made manifest by the third eye upon his brow. Every Salubri who beheld the Progenitor's radiant serenity felt that same eye erupt from their forehead, and for every night hence, the Salubri have been so marked. He had us redouble the path we'd been set upon: keep the kine healthy that our kindred might prosper, and cull those vampires who would endanger the herds.

THE BAALI WARS

In every historical record, the Salubri have held demon-hunting to be our purview. Demons came in Saulot's wake, an infection that lingered and flared again and again. Alone among the Thirteen, Saulot recognized the threat and demanded action; his fury at the Damned who cherished Damnation stood in stark contrast to the promise of Golconda embodied by his Clan. His wrath was terrible to behold, unveiling a militant aspect to our Progenitor that few had witnessed. His anger was answered by his childe, Samiel, who was an exceptionally poor Healer. It was Samiel who forged Saulot's iron-rigid anger, putting steel into the heart of our placid Clan.

How to reconcile our gentle nature with such fury? Looked at another way, we all have the heart of the warrior; Saulot's rage is simply another aspect of ourselves. We kept kine healthy, the better to be preyed upon. We kept Kindred noble, that they would not prey upon the kine unduly. Infernalism of any stripe threatens the lives and souls of all whom it touches. When gentle herbs and pleasant music fail to stave off infection, you must turn to fire and steel.

Sharing his blood with a number of other Salubri, Samiel created the Warriors, swearing to bring judgment to the demon-Kindred who plagued the Second City. The Assamites shame-facedly brought their own Judges into the fight, and the Baali were beaten back. The Warriors were the same as the Healers, they just approached their duties from another angle, and the two bloodlines of the Clan embraced one other as brother and sister.

Samiel died in AD 636, during the final assault on some dusty Baali Levantine stronghold. He was not the first of Saulot's childer to fall, but his loss was felt more keenly than any other,

THE THIRD EYE

I should note that I heard a different tale from Nikolai Steen. Yes, that Nikolai, "the Danish Malkavian". By our friend the Dane's reckoning, Saulot salved Malkav's madness more out of filial piety than love for all Caine's grandchilder. Set and Malkav were brothers to our progenitor, which explains our fraternal loyalty to the latter clan and familial enmity for the former. In Nikolai's tale, Saulot gained his eye before venturing to the East, a gift from his brother and a way to see a bit of the world from a different angle — beyond reason, beyond sight, as a mystic like Malkav would. It was this eye that allowed our founder to survive the Suspire, the vision quest locked within our blood that leads to Golconda, provided one survives a final test. Within the Suspire, one faces both Man and Blood, with only one triumphant at the cusp of Golconda — those who succeed find salvation, those who fail find only red madness. My own sire believed that Saulot backed away from Golconda to lead us there, like a bodhisattva; Nikolai says instead that Saulot failed in his Suspire, yet the sight of his eye led his soul back from Wassail. Certainly, it sounds like something Malkav would do, and statues of three-eyed demigods and bodhisattvas are prizes for archaeologists all along the lands our founder walked.

Friend Steen says that all Malkavians know this tale and swear it to be true, but then, he also told me a story about an elephant.

for he was the only Warrior among them. As we spread our might through the Levant, the Healers assumed control of the Clan. They cleaved fiercely to the ethos of Constantine's Christianity, for ministering to the poor and salvation in God's name resonated strongly with Salubri identity, but this also marginalized our temporal power in an increasingly Muslim territory. Others of our number spread throughout the world, finding the dispossessed or the heretical and tending to them. Thus we remained, guarding the liminality between Kindred and kine during the Long Night.

Until the Crusades.

THE CRUSADES, THE HUNTS

Our Clan died on 6 May, 1291, 158 years after Saulot did.

My sire remembered little of those nights after Saulot's death, only visions of a great and grand wyrm wrestling with itself. When the bloodlust died seven nights later, he tasted the blood of his Clan on his lips, and all three eyes wept with the horror of what he'd done. The Clan was never great in number, but when Tremere drank Saulot, we tore ourselves apart in grief and rage. The Usurpers who ripped the mantle of Clan from our ash-strewn shoulders went to work, thinning our shattered ranks with frightening aplomb.

Ironically, this was a time of great potential for us. The Clan had long grown in tandem with Christianity, Healers working within the Knights Hospitaller, Warriors bearing the red cross of the Templar. The enmity between the two belied the unity of our Clan, which grew stronger with shared shame. As the Crusaders swarmed the Levant and formed their kingdoms, we found ourselves in positions of praxis for the first and only time. The Holy Land became our last bastion, a bulwark against the Usupers.

Without Saulot to guide us, we turned to the other Clans for protection but found uncaring hearts, turned stony from years of checking Cainite interests to keep humanity strong. Acre was our last city of strength, and when the Crusader kingdoms fell, so did our hopes. The crumbling towers of the city were as the peals of a bell, tolling our doom.

We would lose Acre, and we would soon lose Cyprus; already, Philip the Fair seethed at how much of his debt our mortal compatriots owned, and within a decade the Knights Templars would be accused of harboring the damned and burned at the stake (and rightfully so, since they harbored a full half of our Clan). We told the Warriors that night that Saulot could not condone vengeance against the Usurpers; Rayzeel herself told Samiel's brood to cease their attempts to sway the Tzimisce and the Ventrue to war. Even with every other childe of Saulot agreeing, the Warriors sailed to Cyprus, wasting their decades fighting the Northern Crusades or conducting private wars anyways. They all perished (except one; we shall speak of him later). We refused to help them. The few European Watchers (if they even existed) did nothing to aid us, walking along the Silk Road to the East.

THE LONG DAY

The Tremere continued to hunt us, striking everywhere from the eldest of our Clan on down. Were we descended from anyone other than Saulot, we might have tried to replenish our numbers. Instead, we split apart, and we died. The other Clans tacitly endorsed the Tremere, as the

Usupers had more value in existing than we. They had magics they were prepared to use on behalf of their clients, while we chided them for their depredations. Is it any wonder why they chose the magi? With us gone, disease in herds began to grow, and the mortals took notice.

Most of us hid. Only the al-Amin, Salubri who embraced Islam, were open about their heritage; the Ashirra covenant of the Levant treasured them as members of the community. Others like Mokur, Saulot's childe and companion upon his return from the East, continued to preach Golconda. Too often, this led the Tremere right to us. Most never put up a fight unless it involved defending the mortal flock around them, and even then there was a decided tendency to surrender in exchange for communities remaining unharmed.

The Anarch Revolt and mortal upheavals were a welcome respite for us, even if it was traumatic for the rest of Kindred society. It turns out that not having very many elders, Embracing rarely while maintaining a deep sire-childe mentorship, and hiding within dispossessed mortal communities, tends to insulate a Clan against upstart neonates and downtrodden ancillae. Who knew? We survived, even thrived, in some isolated Cathar communities.

The Convention of Thorns ended our somewhat-blessed nights. Backed by the Camarilla, the Tremere resumed their hunt. In 1525, Mokur himself fell to Etrius' fangs, and when word spread, those Salubri left in Europe knew it was time to leave. We took root in the far corners of the world, where the Camarilla could not or would not reach: crossing the bright Sahara to become the Nkulu Zao, being adopted by our long-lost cousins the Wu Zao, or joining the Ravnos in their eternal war against the Cathayan menace. And we took steps to stay ahead of the Camarilla, prepping our hiding spaces before they could sweep across the area. The results are writ across my face, childe.

Three Eyes by Gaslight

Our first flirtation with the Sabbat should be seen as our Anarch Revolt some four centuries too late. Emboldened by the Tremere becoming more involved with the Camarilla, we Salubri ancillae Embraced anew, bringing bright lights into the Clan. Globalization brought the Clan back into contact once again. Those lights flared when they became aware of the larger political situation, and demanded we help the enemies of our ancient foes. They defected en masse to the Sabbat, becoming the first Salubri antitribu.

Their tenure was an unhappy one, for several reasons. We were poorly suited to the Sabbat, at least as it was during the Victoria's reign. I was still in my homeland at the time, before Samiel's Precept shook me out of my quiescence, but I learned the results years later: Salubri lost to Wassail or torn apart by their packmates, trying in vain to cling to Humanity or stop their pack from ripping into some unfortunate group of mortals. And the Tremere of the Sabbat weren't terribly fond of the new Salubri. And so our neonates returned to us chastened, or they never returned at all.

Three Eyes in the Modern Nights

A dead Clan? Hardly. We have to hide our light under a bushel, as my sire was fond of saying, but we shine all the same. The Clan exists in the corners of the world, though I'll grant that "thrive" is too strong a word. Where the Camarilla is weak, where humanity is strong: these are where we ensconce ourselves, cleaving to community and duty. For the most part, it's a solitary existence, defaulting to the deep sire-childe mentorship that has always defined our Clan. When we're separated, forced to run, we try to find or found communities based around our heritage. Why else would I come to Utah, to the lion's den? It is one of the largest Maori communities in the world.

We're hunted by the Camarilla, and our dedication to humanity keeps us separate from the Sabbat, except for a resurgent antitribu. Mortality shields us. Service defines us. Golconda will save us.

Who We Are

The answer to that question, "Who are we?" depends on circumstance. In most cases, we're hunted and scorned, victims of a still-ongoing Tremere pogrom and propaganda campaign. Even when they're not actively hunting us — and truth be told, their attempts these nights are half-hearted at best — they oppose us ideologically, and keep us from surfacing openly in Camarilla cities, even if that was something we desired. We cling to Saulot's example: be a light for those Kindred seeking Golconda, even if we haven't found it. Safeguard those who wish to cling to Humanity. Keep the human herds safe, clean, and ready for reaping.

Look for suffering, and you'll find us there, Embracing a childe to act as our eyes and our hands in a community. We ensure they do not suffer overmuch, even as they remain easy targets for Kindred. We keep fangs from a permanent culling, from taking too much. We avoid most vampires of the Camarilla, unless they seek us for the right reasons — and those reasons are enough to suffer risk of exposure. We avoid too the Sabbat, for they are opposed to all we

are and all we do. The Independent Clans... well, it's best to take them as individuals.

As you've discovered, we often make individual pacts with elders. Even they have favored kine they do not wish to lose to disease or injury, though, and that gives us bargaining power. Obeah allows us to contribute to the health and heartiness of humanity, and if the herds or domitors agree to give blood as payment, what of it?

When disease threatens to run rampant over the mortal herds, we ensure the Kindred population does not suffer. The poor and the religious are our herds. From the teeming masses, those under the bridge as it were, we watch the other vampires within the cities. When we see one struggling under the weight of being a monster, we show him what it means to be a man. When we see a neonate or ancilla choosing to feast on rats and cats, we reach out to her, guide her to the paths of real Humanity.

Why do this, when we are hated and brought nothing but suffering? Some would say we are made to suffer, that it strengthens our souls. Others would disagree.

THE SEVEN

First thing's first: there are more than seven Salubri, let me assure you — and no, I'm not counting antitribu in our number. Still, the Seven are by far the best-known representation of our Clan, and continue to succeed admirably in tainting the opinion of the Camarilla against us. They're a mixed blessing to the rest of the Clan: they draw a great deal of attention, but they also define our perception amongst the Kindred, as many hold their crimes against us. Their faults are not perhaps in their souls, but in themselves.

I'll pass on more of my what sire taught me besides Shakespeare: when the Tremere hunts began to gain legitimacy during the War of Princes, seven elders of the Clan decided to follow in Saulot's footsteps, attempting to find enlightenment beyond the reach of the Usurpers. They followed the Silk Road to the East, ostensibly to find the Watchers and learn what secrets Saulot entrusted to them.

They returned as deranged bodhisattvas, caretakers of a false Golconda. Embracing one childe apiece, then guiding that childe along the first steps to the Red Suspire, they urged their childer to commit diablerie upon them to eternally shepherd Raphael's Promise. The Seven believe they remain within the souls and blood of their diablerists, purifying rather than degrading. Besides acting as beacons for other seekers of Golconda or Tremere hunters, they frequently rip out the souls of mortals for their own inscrutable ends.

On the one hand, they attacked my sire, Matthias of Bath, and attempted to diablerize him when he confronted them sometime around the Enlightenment. On the other hand, the neonate who nearly overpowered my sire showed incredible power and puissance for her age, with radiant veins in her aura instead of the pulsating black of diablerie.

THE WU ZAO

A ta moko is no tatau, but to answer your actual question, no, I don't wear this face all the time. I learned the trick of hiding after a few years in Hong Kong. As I wandered about Victoria Harbour, I happened upon a sailor, easily charmed by tales of filming the Lord of the Rings. I'd just gotten to the topic of tasting blood when he blinked and walked away. Nobody else in the bar could see or hear me, save one, who shook his head sadly and addressed me as "an unwise Scholar".

Perhaps the greatest share of our bloodline still exists in the East, he explained to me over a bit of native food (much better than that tourist trash). The Wu Zao divided their bloodline of old into Scholars and Thieves instead of Healers and Warriors, after two childer of Saulot. Secret keepers of Saulot's wisdom, they watch the other creatures of the night, gently manipulating then against the Wan Kuei, the demon Kindred who hold Korea, China, and Japan. Rather than finding difficulty in interacting with humanity, they grow focused on the small details of their obsessions. They also interact as a community, forming cells and continuing their endless war of weariness against the Wan Kuei. "Xao-lat's wisdom is immortal, even if he was not," said my companion. "We await his return at the turning of the Wheel, and we have kept his enemies weak and cowed for him."

When I asked him if he was one of the elusive Watchers my sire spoke of, he just laughed.

THE AL-AMIN

In nights past, the greatest of our number were found in the Levant, our ancient strongholds. We hunted Baali, tried to bring peace to the fractured lands of the Middle East, and resisted the Camarilla invaders for centuries. The Ashirra Clans considered our bloodline one of their own, never to be betrayed to the hated heathen Tremere.

Until the first of our World Wars, that is. As mortal powers carved up the lands, the Camarilla finally swept in, and we were swept out with them. Six centuries of service, vanished in a few nights of blood and sorcery. A dozen three-eyed vampires joined the rest of us in exile, the remnants of our last public figures.

ANTITRIBU

I thought the Healers alone had survived the pogroms, or perhaps a few lone Watchers in torpor amongst the Wu Zao sect they built. The Sabbat have sheltered us by default,

though our devotion to kine rankles them to such a degree that we could never hope to join, even if we wanted to. Our singular experiment in antitribu was a failure.

Until Adonai arose.

His followers tell the tale: a Sabbat pack found the last Warriors in some ancient, forgotten mine outside Prague, reopened by a Ventrue-backed company a decade before the millennium turned. In a rare display of compassion, the pack brought them to their senses, instructed them on the developments of Tremere and Sabbat, and offered them a place in the pack. Their leader, clad in rotten cloth and rusted mail, clasped the talons of the ductus in fraternal acknowledgement.

Yet none can identify this pack, or have heard of Adonai's rescuers, who acted in a manner so uncharacteristic of Sabbat who come across Kindred slumbering in torpor. None of the antitribu, who strode toughened and defiant into the European fronts and the packs circling London seemed to be Blooded by the Code. My sire claims the fragments of Samiel's words they spout are genuine, but he asks the same question I do: shouldn't a true Warrior know the Code by heart?

If this is the Adonai of old, torpor has tempered his brusque demeanor. This Adonai was subtle at first, keeping his new brood small until House Goratrix vanished beneath the Mexican sands. Then he adopted mass Embrace tactics, until Salubri antitribu were a common sight in Sabbat packs. In these nights, their numbers have grown to eclipse ours, and they have garnered a foothold in the Black Hand, the paramilitary secret society of the Sabbat. Their occult prowess grows by the day, wielding countermagics with talent, acting as terrifying shock troops at the head of battle columns. Formerly regarded by the Sabbat as mere weapons to be pointed towards the Camarilla, the former Warrior Caste has slowly carved out a place of true respect.

When they encounter us, our antitribu show us no enmity — they glory in the inhuman juggernauts they have become, having shed Saulot's mantle to grasp their destiny. Their flame puts to shame our ash and embers. They invite us to join them, to bring two castes of the Salubri together once more, to heal our riven Clan from the scars of Acre. I met Adonai himself out in New Mexico, under the stars and bright yellow moon. His childer scarred themselves with flaming brands and danced beside bonfires. His eyes danced with the charisma of the pyre, all the fires of heaven and earth shining with fury and ecstasy. "There is a place for you with us," he told me. "Our herds sicken and die. These whelps abuse the kine for pleasure, instead of treating them like valuable food. Join us, seize the respect we are due, and take back our Clan."

Saulot help me, I dream about their fires every day.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Ad-Hoc Emissary

Your sire always told you to hide, but you never could listen. Your skills were too useful to your herd, to the herds of other vampires. Then two strange things happened: an car crash victim with a strange aura offered you a boon against the Tremere, and a freaking werewolf cried in front of you and thanked you for saving his wife, vile spawn or not. Now, like the Watchers of old, you act as public emissary to various supernatural factions around the city. You're sacrosanct, and the prince constantly asks you how much leverage you think you can levy as she schemes to use your contacts to further her own ends. You wonder which will come first: her deciding to throw you to the Tremere calling for your blood, or your new friends deciding you're the monster they think you are.

Chosen One

You were always special in school. Not the most studious, or the most popular, but you had spirituality about you. You believed you had a calling to the holy orders, but no religion truly fit your parents, so none fit you. You were a great and grand soul, but there was no place for you in the world. In college, you met a much older man who brought you to your place in the world. He was one of seven, he said, one who were a light in the darkness for the displaced of the world. He brought you into that dark world, and then you took his light into yourself. Now you try to shed that light on others, before you have to spread your own on.

Military Doctor

The army's offer to pay for school certainly helped, but what appealed to you about military service was the same thing that drove you to become a doctor in the first place: being where people needed you the most, right in the thick of things. Compassion fueled your care, as you saw healthy and fit soldiers broken by roadside bombs or shattered by the cruel rigors of war. Compassion saw you treat civilians injured by those same bombs or the strikes of your army's drones. Compassion was what marked you, and what Damned you when the pale woman in the white hijab came for you.

You went missing in action, stayed in the cities after your countrymen left. The al-Amin welcomed you even as they hid from the rest of the Ashirra, betrayed by the Camarilla alliance. For now, you work as their envoy in Camarilla territory, your youth and foreign association working to the benefit of the shattered remnants of your bloodline.

Merits and Flaws

Scent of the Other (1pt. Merit)

"You don't seem like a soul-sucker…" For whatever reason, your third eye shuts tightly when you choose to hide it, and your blood and aura don't give away your Clan. You might be regarded as a Caitiff, or as a member of another Clan. In any case, Tremere or other Salubri hunters are thrown off your trail, unless you do something to reveal yourself again.

Sight Beyond Sight (3pt. Merit)

Your third eye occasionally experiences visions and pierces illusions. When your eye is open (via use of Auspex or Obeah), you occasionally pierce Obfuscate or Chimerstry. Some past Salubri have seen through faerie miens or glimpsed the dead lands of ghosts. You have no control over what your eye sees, though it'll sometimes open involuntarily in response to the above phenomena.

Warrior's Heart (3pt. Merit)

Steel sits in the placid heart of the Salubri bloodline, and Adonai's resurrection has caused your own heart to flutter ever so slightly. Like the Healers of old, you may learn the Valeren powers of the antitribu at a cost of current rating x6; if you know the first two dots of Obeah and Valeren, you gain a 2-die bonus to using the first two Discipline dots. However, your warrior's heart suffers from the Precept of Samiel, the well-defined wanderlust that affects many Salubri — for every week you spend in the same location, you lose a point of Willpower, as your soul agitates without action. The antitribu might have a similar Merit allowing them to learn Obeah at a cost of always helping someone in need, at the Storyteller's discretion.

The Eighth (6pt. Flaw)

Your sire is one of the Seven, the diablerist Golconda-seekers, trying to ensure the spiritual wealth of salvation would never be lost with their Final Death. They sought you as a successor, and proudly prepared you for your sacred duty. You, on the other hand, smiled at their lies, listened to their bullshit, and ran for the hills the first chance you got. You're constantly hunted, not only by the Tremere, but by your sire, the other Seven, and their various hangers-on. You must be at least Ninth Generation to take this Flaw.

Permanent Third Eye (2 or 4pt. Flaw; Salubri and Tremere only)

While most sealed third eyes are visible as a slight scar, yours remains permanently open on your forehead. For 2 points, the eye is merely open, and may be closed for a scene

on a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 6). For 4 points, the eye sheds light, increasing all Stealth difficulties by 2.

Discipline Powers

Auguring the Sickness (Obeah/Valeren ••)

This power allows the Salubri to go beyond Obeah or Valeren's ability to determine wounds and reveal the fine damage caused by illness and disease. While best used by a medically-trained Salubri, even novices find the power useful.

System: The Salubri holds his hands above the patient, and the third eye gently teases out a vision of the afflicted tissues made of pure light (neonate Salubri delightfully describe them as holograms). The player rolls Perception + Medicine (difficulty 7). Each success reveals one fact about the illness, including likely developments and symptoms and potential avenues of treatment. Additionally, once augured, the vampire may use Corpore Sano (V20, p. 469) to cure the disease outright, at a difficulty determined by the commonality and virulence of the disease (difficulty 5 for the common cold, difficulty 7 for most forms of herpes or chicken pox, or difficulty 9 for Ebola or HIV).

Ending the Watch (Obeah ••••)

Ancient tales record Enochian Salubri walking the night streets, freeing those mortals ravaged by vampiric excess from pain. The death watch were respected for their knowledge and power, garnered by preserving elements of a dying mortal's soul within their own.

Ending the Watch can be used only on a dying mortal or one who truly, without coercion, wishes for death. Generally, the mortally wounded or the elderly are targets of this power, but torture victims or those suffering deeply from depression are equally viable. Even in these nights, the Tremere continue to speak of this power with dread, calling the Salubri soulsuckers to all who will listen.

System: The Salubri spends a Willpower point and lays a hand over a valid target's heart, peacefully and painlessly killing them. The player then rolls the character's Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7); upon a success, the target's soul is absorbed, remaining within the Salubri and visible via Auspex as a bright white vein in the aura. With the soul's vitality residing inside the Salubri, she knows much of what the dying mortal did — interesting secrets, passwords, or personal minutiae. She may recall specific facts of the target's memory ("What is the bank password?"), requiring an Intelligence + Empathy roll (difficulty 5) for each significant fact. She may also consume the soul; for each success on the original roll, she may heal herself of one level of lethal or bashing damage. A botch on either roll inflicts a level of aggravated damage as the soul bursts free of the Salubri's. The Salubri may hold a number of souls within her equal to her Generation Background.

THE THIRD EYE

Obeah and Valeren cause a physical change in vampires: a bump or nodule developing in the center of the forehead, eventually cracking open when the character learns the Discipline's second dot. This stigmata bleeds whenever it opens, but remains an open wound for many mortal lifetime as the eye inside takes hundreds of years to fully form. Those clinging to Humanity have human eyes, while inhuman Path followers have concomitantly inhuman eyes. The scar or eye opens intermittently (when the Salubri is agitated), or when she uses any level of Auspex, Obeah, or Valeren. Attempting to cover the sensitive opening results in a penalty of one die to all rolls, though a decent hoodie is usually good enough to keep it from being easily noticed. It may be retracted and hidden for the scene with a Stamina + Stealth roll (difficulty 5), though a slight, faded scar remains on the forehead. Using any level of Obeah or Valeren brings it forth once more.

Combination Disciplines

Vital Fluids (Obeah •••, Fortitude •••)

With complete mastery over her undead frame and the power of vitae healing, the Salubri finds that healing wounds no longer overly taxes her duties towards humanity. Additionally, the Salubri may apply Corpore Sano (V20 p. 469) to herself, though the only benefit is for healing aggravated damage.

System: Any blood spent to heal bashing or lethal damage returns to the vampire's blood pool, at a rate of one point per hour. This does not apply to points lost to use Copore Sano. This power is always active at no cost.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

MARK KELLY
16

SAMEDI

"Neo-Hoodoo is the 8 basic dances of 19th century New Orleans' Place Congo — the Calinda, the Bamboula, the Chacta, the Babouille, the Conjaille, the Juba, the Congo, and the VooDoo — modernized into the Philly Dog, the Hully Gully, the Funky Chicken, the Popcorn, the Boogaloo, and the dance of great American choreographer Buddy Bradley."

— Ishmael Reed

Percentages

Charles thought he might be overcome with superstition when he was told where the meeting would take place. The air was heady with the scent of life. Lush green curled up to the tombstones like a tired lover. The vaults and statues had stood up to hurricanes and storms for hundreds of years and retained a quiet dignity. The cemetery was beautiful.

His contact, however, was not. Charles would have thought Agau a corpse propped up against a vault if he wasn't currently flipping through the requested papers. The man seemed to be muttering to himself, but Charles couldn't see Agau's mouth move much. He was dressed strangely as well — sunglasses, with leather gloves and a thick leather overcoat. Charles sweated through light linens in the south Florida heat, even at night. Agau's skin was dry and pale. When Vasquez had told him the killer's name, Charles did a little bit of research on his phone. Agau was a voodoo loa. An angry one at that, who called himself the gunner of gods. Obviously a code name.

"It sounds like a strange request," said Charles, "but I still love her very much. Can... can you make sure she doesn't feel any pain?"

Agau laughed a low rasp, like two heavy stones scraping together. "But you want to make sure she doesn't go to the press about your infidelity," he said. The voice was not much more pleasant.

Charles nodded his head. "Vasquez didn't tell me how much this was going to cost. I brought some cash with me in the car. Half up front now, half once it's done?"

The rasp returned along with a slow head shake. Somewhere, Charles thought he noticed a similarity in the way that Agau and Vasquez moved.

"One third now," said Agau. He began to pull off one of the leather gloves Charles noticed earlier. "One third when it's done. One third on the next full moon or when Marie Laveau

comes to me in her dreams and tells her favorite son she needs you to provide her a favor."

Agau removed the glove. The hand it protected was shriveled and grey. When the fingers on the exposed hand flexed, Charles felt his throat catch. Agau pushed up the sleeve, exposing a sickly grey arm. Charles brushed away the bone he thought he saw poking through the skin as a trick of the moonlight.

"Whichever comes first," said Agau as he sliced his wrist with a razor he pulled from his boot.

Charles' eyes widened as thick blood oozed from the wound. Agau produced a ceramic cup from underneath his long leather coat. The blood crawled down Agau's forearm like a lazy spider until it plopped into the cup.

"How much?" asked Charles. "uh, in total?"

Agau held out the cup with his exposed hand. The rotting fingers delicately gripped the handle. Agau's extended what remained of his pinky.

"Do you want her dead or not?" asked Agau.

Charles took the tea cup into his trembling hands, forcing himself not to look down as he drank.

Digging Up the Past

Our origins are wrapped in the origins of vodou, voudoun, hoodoo, or voodoo — take your pick. The many ways to say and spell it should be the first hint of how adaptable we are. These faiths arose because the authorities running the slave trades forbade African religious rituals. The slaves created a new faith based on ideas from West African spirituality, Roman Catholicism, European mysticism, and even a few Masonic ideals. If you think there's no difference between these faiths, ask your Christian friends whether the Catholics, the Baptists, and the Methodists are all the same.

Our bloodline was born out of the slave trade that fueled North American expansion. The plantation owners of the Caribbean brutalized their workers during the day, and we terrorized the workers at night. We took advantage of the isolated locations to become small kings of petty domains. Travelling by boat was a treacherous proposition at the time. Weeks in cramped quarters with few spaces untouched by the sun aboard a vessel vulnerable to fire meant most Kindred claimed whatever small piece of solid land they touched as soon as possible. A rare few were able to adapt seized ships from slavers and took to the sea as pirates.

Our unfortunate appearance often makes other Kindred think we're Nosferatu. They were certainly on the slave ships, preying on the unfortunates huddled in the holds. I'll admit, I've taken advantage of the confusion, especially when passing through a domain where I don't feel like answering too many questions about who I am and what I'm doing there. You have to be careful, when dealing with the sewer rats, however. They may want you to think they are piteous and harmless, but they can be just as vicious as the pretty ones when push comes to shove.

There was another Clan that rivaled the Nosferatu's terrible visage; one whose name we don't even mention. They were also associated with death for most of their existence. And yet, if we were truly descended from them, why not just claim their name and all the glory and prestige associated with it? Because nothing comes for free. Those that came before had their own baggage. We don't need to make claims to a long dead Clan, and we certainly don't need the problems that such an ego boost brings with it.

Speaking of problems... This shall-not-be-named Clan was supposedly the one that the Giovanni usurped within the last millennium. The old necromancers walked between the living and the dead. They could control those spirits weak enough (or foolish enough) to let themselves be bound, and perhaps could have even done more, had they not been so distracted by their earthly whims. That is why we respect the loa, while not having any real use for ghosts or their puppet-masters. Mere ghosts are just the reflections of humans unable to outrun death. The loa have existed forever and shown the cleverness needed to take power as gods. The Giovanni had potential, but instead squandered it on fine clothes, foolish vices, and selfish desires.

To which of these Clans do we belong? Only an outsider would ask such a rude question. All three Clans had a hand in making us what we are tonight. We belong to Samedi, in the same way that a Toreador belong to their namesake. Except in our case, the true name of our founder hasn't been lost to time and replaced with a word created to not draw the attention of a sleeping undead god. We are still on good terms with our founder. The Baron is young enough to still walk alongside us in the shadows, yet his wisdom is ancient enough to walk with the loa in their power and understanding. We are His.

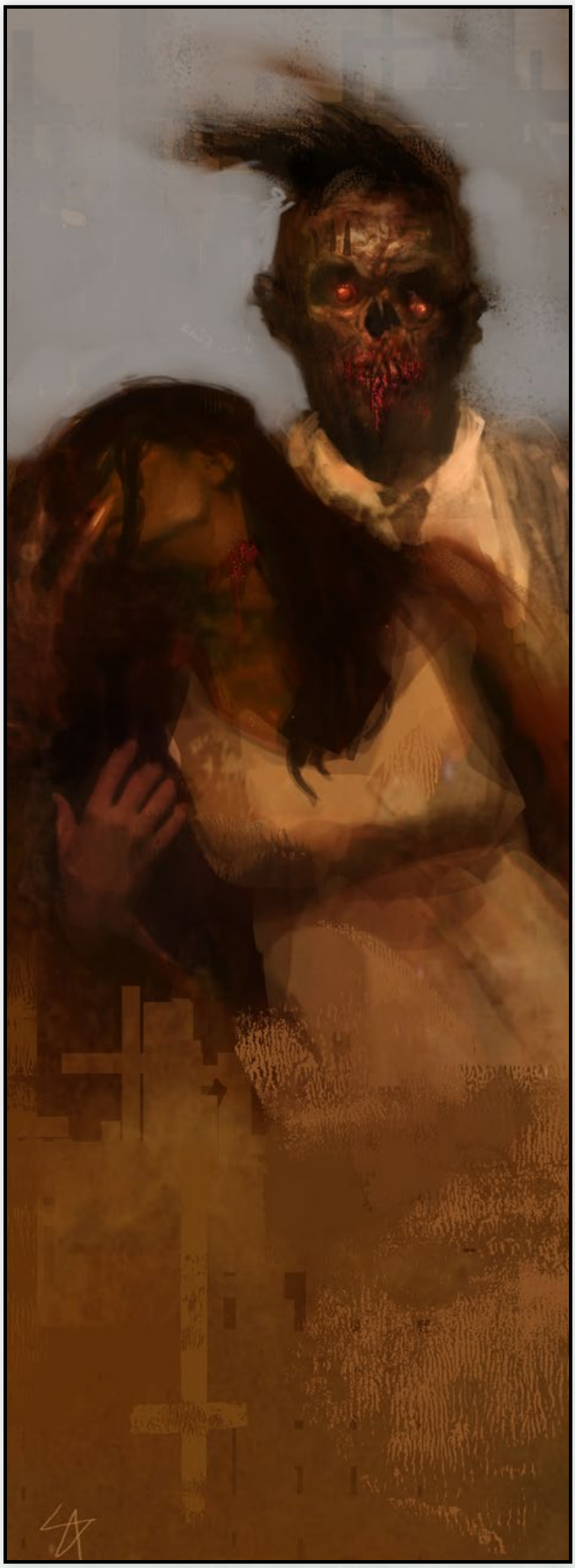
Our Founding Father

In order to understand us, you must understand the founder of the feast. The Baron is the loa of resurrection. He appears dressed for a Haitian funeral in top hat, tuxedo, and dark glasses. He's known for his carousing and encourages those who wish his favor to leave gifts of cigars and rum when they pray. He is a contradictory figure that celebrates life while inextricably linked to death. He is the master of death, collecting souls to escort to the afterlife, but indulges in vices as if there is no tomorrow. Sounds very familiar, no?

When you ask other Kindred about our history, they want to know if the Baron existed before we did. If he did, it suggests to them the loa are real, something we know to be true. If the Baron is a loa, then the others mentioned as his family, like Erzulie and Damballah, were also something else. Something not seen before and something not seen since. This way, Samedi is another challenge to the myth of Caine and all the vampires springing from him and his curse. It may not matter to many, but walk into a room full of Caine worshippers, and you might not walk out under your own power.

To keep things nice and easy, these Kindred (and others) suggest that the Baron was created by the makers of vodou. We stole his name and his face to make thing easier for ourselves. It wouldn't be the first time Kindred played up to the myths that humanity creates, and it certainly won't be the last. If this is true, all the things important to us — the dead, the loa, the respect for our founder — are all lies. It's all card tricks and long cons to distract from some other purpose. To some, nothing is ever as simple as it seems, and they blind themselves to look for deeper meaning. But after the shock of learning about the secret world of the Kindred, I can hardly blame someone from looking beneath everything to seek a deeper, darker truth.

The story my sire told to me was that the Baron did exist before our bloodline as a being of power. He came across



a lonely vampire at the crossroads one night. The vampire cried tears of blood about the loneliness of her existence. Samedi spoke with her till the morning about death, life, vampires, and even a little bit about music. She whispered the secret of vampires into his ear the moment the sun came up. They both laughed as she disintegrated into ash. He sired his first childe the next night and has been fascinated with us ever since. He's a loa and a vampire, just like most of us were human and vampires.

There are other stories other sires have told their childer. They cast Samedi as a fugitive, on the run from other, more powerful Kindred looking to wipe him out because of his unique abilities. He settled in the islands for many years. When the plantations and the slaves came, he kept to himself, though his abilities grew the legend of the loa. When the Kindred looking to control the wealth of the plantations arrived, Samedi took up the top hat and the legend to defend his domain. In some versions of the story, Samedi comes face to face with Augustus Giovanni, who was the Kindred that forced Samedi out of his home in the first place. These stories end with a deal struck between the Samedi and the Giovanni, but one that neither party seems happy with. Even if the story isn't true, the tension between us still exists to this day.

Perhaps if you are lucky enough to meet the Baron, you can ask him yourself. The Baron is seen from time to time, rumored to have a grand haven hidden under an old plantation in Port-au-Prince. He's not exclusive to the island though, making appearances as far north as New York City and as far south as Johannesburg in the same evening. The Baron insists that, as the loa of the crossroads, he can travel in ways nobody else is able to understand. Our enemies claim it's a trick so other Kindred can dress up in his iconic attire and pretend to be him. If you want a visit from our founder in a poor mood, such accusations can't be beat as an invitation.

Havana Nocturne

After World War II, Cuba was the next big score for organized crime. American Mafia families used their political power and financial reserves to bribe Fulgencio Batista's regime. Batista gave up his country to their criminal influence. Havana soon became a vacation spot known for its luxury and decadence. Anything could be had for a price, and the tales of what the high-rollers at Mafia casinos indulged in rivalled anything out of Rome's most outrageous legends. Though these nights would not last forever, the Mafia refined the lessons learned here when Bugsy Siegel was put in charge of developing a new destination fueled by humanity's need for vice: Las Vegas.

Where Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano laid seeds, their puppet masters reaped the benefits. Many Ventrue and Toreador Princes took advantage of the friendly environment to indulge in their darkest desires. Many Kindred operated with only the smallest caution paid to the Masquerade. Some islands became fiefs rules openly by their Kindred masters. The natives ran scared from black cars kidnapping entire families in the night. The official word was the usual tyranny of a dictator, but there were plenty of Cubans that ended up as feasts for visiting Kindred dignitaries of both the Camarilla and the Sabbat.

It's easy to think that Castro was a Brujah counter-plot to the Ventrue manipulations of the Mafia. It's just as likely that he and other revolutionaries like Che Guevarra were tired of the corruption of Batista's regime and decided to overthrow it on their own. Cuba fell to the Communist rebels on New Year's Eve, 1958. The first few nights of 1959 found many of the Kindred of Havana scrambling to whatever sanctuaries they could find. Revolutions are an excellent time for the Jyhad to flare up and enemies to settle scores. The Samedi provided sanctuary for many of these Kindred, collecting debts which are still being repaid to these modern nights. Those who once scoffed at our backward religion and uncultured ways begged and pleaded for us to open our crypts and hide them from the teeth of their enemies and the torches of their hunters.

Many of the Kindred who fled from Castro's revolution were part of Clan Giovanni. Their connections to organized crime meant Havana quickly became a stronghold of their Clan. I even remember rumors of Crocetta Giovanni breaking two barriers at once as the first Giovanni Prince in the New World and one of the first female Giovanni Princes ever. The fleeing Giovanni who offered merely money and favors to our people were left to their Final Deaths. The ones who offered something useful survived. Our connections to the spirits sing in our blood, but the Giovanni who taught some of us their Necromancy made those Samedi even more powerful than before. While our bloodline is small enough that we need not concern ourselves with those who know necromancy and those who do not, those who do are often deferred to as leaders when more than one of us gather in a city. If they can speak to spirits directly, most figure, they can speak to the other Kindred of the city for all of us.

Many of those Giovanni fared poorly once evidence of the price they paid for safety got back to their family. Crocetta's very public and very messy Final Death is still whispered about to other Kindred as an example of Giovanni brutality. The Clan hates us, claiming that we stole their secrets. Their members swear bounties on Samedi who flaunt necromancy, but many of them don't discriminate between those of us who do or do not use the Discipline. By their thinking, any destroyed

Samedi is an example to those who might have the ability to keep it hidden. For a Clan that prides itself as negotiators and shrewd businessmen, isn't it sad to see the temper tantrums thrown when they end up on the bad side of a deal for once?

Laissez Les Bon Temps Roulez

Though we were born in the islands, the Samedi now stretch throughout the world. Most of our Kindred exist alone or in pairs where they do, but we've come a long way from being the sole vampire claiming multiple plantations as our domain. We're usually okay with working and playing well with others, though it often takes time and effort to establish those relationships. Both the Camarilla and the Sabbat are uncomfortable with us unless we take steps to make nice.

Most of the time, the Camarilla's beef with us is shallow but important: we look like walking, talking corpses, and they have a Masquerade to uphold. It's understandable, but it also means that if something goes down in the city, we're usually number one on the scapegoat list. They do the same thing to their own members, but since we're not an official part of the club, we don't have anyone to back us up. Even if you make friends with, say, the Nosferatu, they'll shrink into the shadows quickly if that means you take the fall for something they did.

The Sabbat, on the other hand, don't give a shit about how we look. They don't give a shit about much, really, which is why they want to tear it all down. You'd think that an organization that causes so much death would be one we'd get behind, but you'd be wrong. Death is a natural part of the world. Senseless death caused by manmade disasters and senseless violence is not. They stomp whatever gets in their way and then either blow town when things get rough or do it again if anyone stands up to them. We don't like to cause trouble, and the Sabbat do nothing but.

We share a lot of space with the Setites and their rivals in the Sabbat, the Serpents of the Light. The bad news is that because a lot of their Kindred have adapted voodoo trappings in their rituals and Disciplines, they give the Baron a bad name. By the time you're done explaining the difference between the loa, petro, and rada magic, your haven is already on fire. The good news is that because they hate each other so much, they rarely look at us as a threat. Often, they assume that we're on their side and want to help screw over the other guy. If you can play that game right — and don't mind a slow, painful death if you screw up — you can live pretty large off of the middle ground.

Many of the Anarchs brush off our talk of the loa as superstitious foolishness. This seems like a silly thing for a bunch of vampires to concern themselves with, but it's usually cover for fears about us as Setite spies and saboteurs. We've done well by the Baron, so their calls for taking down the Kindred in power usually fall on deaf ears... if we even have ears in the first place. They do, however, have excellent access to criminal contacts and the sorts of people who pay us for our abilities, so writing them off completely is probably not the best option.

Many of us still call the islands of the Caribbean home. We're stretched out through several of the larger cities, even if only a member or two in each. It's been this way for hundreds of years, and may be why we don't have much in the way of organization or political power. You'll find a handful of us in Port-au-Prince and Port Royale, but the only time there is a large gathering is when the Baron makes his presence known. The Day of the Dead is the one day he's sure to be in Port-au-Prince. I've heard that if you find the true Baron, any favor you ask of him will be done in honor of the loa.

As civilization conquered North America, the cities called us there. We're not as urban-bound as some of the other Clans, but having a ready food source and easily collected dead bodies became a situation too easy to pass up. We have a few singular members that have travelled all throughout the continent, but we have two cities where a few of us have gathered as in influential presence. New Orleans, of course, thanks to its reputation for both piracy and voodoo. We've recently strengthened our position there in the aftermath of the storms that shook the old power structure to the core. Miami also feels like home to a few of us because of the island refugee populations that wash ashore on a daily basis. It's also the base of operations for Boca Muerte, a Samedi who smuggles items in his coffin by shipping himself places as a corpse.

Some of us returned to the origin of vodou in West Africa. This is where we step between the Setites and the Serpents of the Light most often. There are other forces at work here as well, but with all the different things on the menu, we don't stand out as often as we do elsewhere in the world. A rotting corpse whistling in the heat is far less dangerous than a clash between snakes. Africa offers an excellent mix of being able to work openly while not running against those who take offense to not being careful about being hidden.

Digging Our Own Graves

No matter where you go around the world, there will always be a criminal element. We often fall in with them because of our perpetual status as outsiders. If you're willing to do dirty work, nobody cares if it looks like you got hit by a

bus. Criminal activity and Kindred intrigues often go hand in hand. There may be Clans that pull the strings of larger, organized outfits, but the small crews those outfits use to keep their hands clean usually need someone willing and able to do what we do. There are few other occupations where wearing a mask is a part of the job, and not many of them offer as much fun and financial freedom as being a getaway driver or a second story guy.

Often times, this means being able to move illegally obtained goods from one place to the other. We know a few things about smuggling thanks to our condition. We might not have pull with Teamsters, but there are plenty of small operations that use our people to make sure something gets to where it needs to be without having all the proper paperwork. My sire claims that the first of our kind to work as a smuggler and a pirate had his name struck from the history books because he was so successful raiding European interests with a ship full of freed slaves. I don't know if it was Samedi himself, but he does love his rum, does he not?

For those who prefer to work alone, there are plenty of people who need killing to be done and quite a few aren't interested in getting wrapped up with Assamites in order to get a throat cut. We can look like anyone and can take a hit if things go wrong. That doesn't even count the peculiar abilities of our signature Discipline. We can get inside secure locations as a strange white powder (well, maybe not so much anymore), and we can poison humans with just a touch. While the authorities are figuring out that the target just didn't get sick on their own, we're putting money in an off-shore account and already considering the next contract.

Our relationship with death sometimes becomes a professional one. Because we spent so much of our time in graveyards on the island, when death rites became more formalized, we were in a prime position to move into control. While larger Clans have taken over the large commercial firms that make money handling burials, we still lay claim to funeral homes and coroner's offices across the world. Our services become vital because upholding the Masquerade often means either altering a body to look like it died from natural causes or making sure it never ends up under the harsh lights of a medical examiner's table. Few Kindred think of these areas when drawing up their complex webs of power and intrigue, but everyone needs them in the end.

The Giovanni Connection

Our relationship with the Giovanni is complex. Regardless of whether the tales about a deal between the Baron and Augustus are true, any sort of full disclosure is very unlikely. In the absence of evidence, many colorful explanations have sprung up to explain why the Baron doesn't get along with Augustus. Or, more specifically, why neither the Samedi nor the Giovanni seem happy with the bargain that they supposedly struck.

This is the version of the story I've heard: Augustus met with the Baron under somewhat pleasant terms. There was a minor disagreement about just what the Giovanni could do with their abilities. All loa are ghosts, but not all ghosts are loa. Augustus sought out the Baron for guidance on this subject, yet did not heed his advice. The Giovanni suffered because of it and threatened to go to war with us. Cooler heads prevailed, but since then the Samedi and the Giovanni don't see eye to eye on much of anything. They don't understand why we don't try to command the loa like they command the dead. We don't understand why we would even bother trying. Anyone trying to show power over the loa fool themselves at best and set themselves up for a great fall at worst.

Many of us have an interest in their powers of necromancy, for obvious reasons. Thanatosis gives us control over the body in death, while necromancy gives us control of the spirits of the dead. We make a good team with the Giovanni… when we get along. Because we run in many of the same circles, individual members of their family enter into relationships of convenience with our Kindred. This can lead to making necromancy easier to learn from specific teachers, should those teachers survive long enough. Our blood sometimes takes to necromancy like few other Disciplines, thanks to the blessing of the loa.

While those of our blood sometimes have a knack for necromancy, sometimes we don't. One take on the bad deal the Baron made was a curse upon his line making using necromancy more difficult. We all owe him our unlives, but those who take advantage of his image do so with his permission. The price paid for walking in the Baron's shoes is not being able to develop necromancy as well as those of us who prefer our own ugly mugs. In this version of the story, Augustus met with a few false Barons that extracted some goodies out of him. By the time he got to the real one, he was sick of being fooled.

There is one other option for learning necromancy, but it's not one most people like to take. The Harbingers of Skulls apparently stole the Discipline away from the Giovanni. A few have offered to teach us how to use necromancy as a way to get back at the Giovanni, but these lessons are hardly free. They usually mean getting mixed up in someone else's intrigues, not to mention pushing on the bruised relationship we have with the Giovanni. Being able to speak to the loa directly sounds lovely, but navigating the strings attached by the Harbingers might make the power not worth the cost.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Body Double

You make looking like a dead guy work for you. Sometimes, a dead body is needed to convince the authorities that someone is dead. You provide that body — your own — for a fee. A work night usually means a ride to the morgue or the funeral home (it helps to have someone there on your payroll). You might slip out the back or you might pay them off at the end of the night. Occasionally, you have to dig up a grave and climb inside when someone starts snooping around a Kindred playing much younger and more alive than they really are. The important thing is that the paperwork says there's a body where the body is supposed to be. If some hunter digs up the grave in a few years, it's not your problem. Unless they want to renegotiate at the end of the night.

Hijacking Urban Legend

They say that Blackbeard used to tie fuses and candle wicks into his beard and light them to convince his opponents he was of the devil. You don't need the extra theatrics, but you take advantage of your corpse-like appearance in a similar way. Whether you are getting a truck on a lonely highway to pull over or taking the deck of a freighter in a midnight raid, you count on your strange look to frighten targets and build your legend. How badly you break the Masquerade depends on how poorly your planning goes, but you rarely feel the heat. Most of your raids are carried out between the domains of the same Princes that pay you well for your illegal goods.

Speaker of the Crossroads

All Kindred have one foot in the grave and one in the underworld. You pride yourself on being able to negotiate both worlds, unlike most who ignore the dead parts of their nature. You serve as a gateway between the living and the dead, carrying messages between Kindred and their living relatives or speaking to the ghosts of their victims. What you ask for in return depends on how much your patron can afford to give. You usually help the poor for free but take the rich for all they are worth.

Combination Disciplines

Switched At Death (Thanatosis •, Obfuscate •••)

Usually, the Samedi take great pains to hide their shriveled, dead appearance. Looking like the right corpse at the right time, however, can prove to be quite useful.

System: Roll Wits + Awareness with a difficulty equal to the observer's current Willpower. Success allows the user to appear as a specific dead body that they've touched. The power allows the illusion to emulate any damage done to the body, such as a fatal gunshot wound or a severed head. Any actions the Kindred takes that are out of place for a dead body, such as obvious movement or direct communication, trigger

a Courage roll for the observer to stay in the presence of the Kindred. This power can only duplicate the state of the body the Kindred contacts. If the mortal has been dead 100 years, the Kindred will look like a skeleton.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Grisly Gris-Gris (Fortitude ••, Thanatosis ••)

A common voudoun artifact is a gris-gris bag. These talismans protect the wearer from harm or bad luck. You can provide a similar type of protection… to those with an iron stomach.

System: The Kindred must spend a point of blood and break off a small piece of their body, such as a bit of hair, a fingernail, or a piece of skin. The target must ingest the Kindred's body part. The next time the target makes a Stamina roll to soak damage, he or she adds a number of Fortitude dice to the roll equal to the Kindred's Fortitude or Thanatosis, whichever is lower. While the gris-gris is in the target's body, they temporarily lose one dot in Appearance per hour as their appearance becomes more and more corpse-like. If the target drops to zero Appearance this way, they become violently ill and vomit up the gris-gris along with the contents of their stomach. The target may choose to expel the gris-gris at any time once it's become active.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Exquisite Corpse (Fortitude •••, Obfuscate •••)

When Kindred rise every night, their bodies usually return to the same state they were in. You are able to maintain that perfect look throughout the night through a combination of supernatural physical toughness and your ability to control how others perceive you.

System: The Kindred suffers no cosmetic changes when she takes damage. If she gets shot, there's no bullet hole. If a limb is removed, it turns to dust and an illusory one appears where the other once was. All health levels and dice pool penalties remain as normal, but someone trying to hurt the Kindred must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) after the first successful attack, or be stunned in disbelief. If stunned, all future rolls that scene to hurt the Kindred are at +2 difficulty.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Elder Disciplines

Marrow Sucker (Thanatosis ••••• •)

All animals contain a spark of life. This power allows you to scrape, suck, and savor those small bits of life out of dead things to allow you to survive. It's not pretty and it's messy as hell, but when you're locked in a crypt with nothing but bones, it can keep you out of torpor for a while.

System: For every 20 pounds or 9 kilograms of bone the Kindred eats (roughly the weight of the bones in one human skeleton), they gain one point of blood. The Kindred places the bone in or near its mouth and begins to suck. The bones turn into a grey, pulpy mass which the Kindred must then swallow. The product of this Discipline is far less satisfying that animal blood, and only those with this level of the Thanatosis Discipline can benefit from consuming it.

Merits and Flaws

Death Grip (3pt. Merit)

Thanks to your connection with death, you have a keen insight few other Kindred possess. When in contact with a dead body, you make a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 7). On a success, you intuitively know how the body died. On a failure, you suffer an illusory version of the wound that saps a point of Willpower. On a botch, your body mirrors the wound and hurts itself in the same manner, causing lethal damage equal to the final blow.

Stitcher (3pt. Merit)

Getting blown apart isn't a big deal. When parts of your body are cut off or otherwise removed due to damage, you may make a Dexterity + Medicine (difficulty 7) to sew the part back in place properly. If successful, the cost of healing the wound is reduced by one blood point.

Brittle Body (2 or 4pt. Flaw)

Your already disfigured corpse doesn't handle the physical demands of being a Kindred as well as it should. Your bones break at inopportune times, your skin tears if you move too quickly, and you have to be careful on a nightly basis. The 2-point version of this flaw gives you a +2 difficulty to all Physical rolls because of the delicate nature of your body. The 4-point version means that you also hang onto physical damage longer than other Kindred. You may still heal health levels as normal, but any dice penalties remain until the next evening when you awaken. This is in addition to the penalty to Physical rolls.

Mortal Flashbacks (5pt. Flaw)

Your body remembers your death. Every night when you awaken, you vividly remember the pain of your death wound. The wound reopens during the night and closes itself shortly before you rise. This traumatic reminder of your mortality starts your night off in a bad way. You lose a point of Willpower each night when you awaken, because of the trauma of dying again.

MARK
KELLY
16

TRUE BRUJAH

"We have to distrust each other. It is our only defense against betrayal."

– Tennessee Williams

RECOGNITION

She stood out in the hustle and bustle of the city for her stillness. There wasn't a single crease in her plain tailored suit, the long skirt of which gave her an oddly Edwardian look. Her waist-length hair hung casually down her back as she stared intently at a tablet she was working on. When she looked up, straight at Lewis, somehow he thought he'd seen her before. He involuntarily took a step back, and a jogger ran straight into him.

"Watch what you're doing, you stupid prick," the jogger snarled as he tried to get past Lewis.

Lewis felt the rage growing. He turned and put a hand on the man, stopping him dead in his tracks. The jogger, being twice Lewis' size, frowned in surprise when he couldn't budge his hand. Lewis couldn't help smiling — he did love this part. He could feel the voice inside telling him how good it would feel to tear the man apart. It was very tempting, demanding even, and behind it lay the hunger.

But the street was too crowded. He had to think of the Masquerade, and the amount of strikes he already had with the Prince. Gathering his will, he began to push the rage down. He felt it scream at him as he forced it away. It was getting harder every time, but he managed to release his grip and growl a command to run. The jogger didn't need telling twice.

The woman across the street was tapping swiftly on her tablet. Was she recording this? He'd not fought down the frenzy just for some bystander to blow the Masquerade and get him the blame. Willing vitae into his limbs, he began to move towards her like lightning, his hands ready to tear her throat apart if need be.

But before he was halfway across the street, he noticed the world was not moving past in a blur as it should. In fact, he was the one moving slowly. Then everything just stopped. Everything, that is, except the woman. She unhurriedly finished making her notes and then walked over to Lewis' frozen form. Around her the rest of the street stood still as well. Two children were throwing a ball to each other and the ball was hanging in midair. What was happening, and who was this woman?

"You are caught in time," she said a little primly, barely looking up. "And I am Annabelle."

Could she read his mind?

"Of course I can't read your mind. I just know what you are going to say. We've done this often enough."

Perhaps she would explain...

"You will answer a few questions to confirm my studies. Blink once for yes, twice for no."

Her voice had dropped into a set pattern, like a flight attendant reciting safety protocols.

"Did you recognize me?" Lewis blinked once and she seemed impressed. "Interesting. Perhaps we are finally getting somewhere."

"Did you recognize the man who bumped into you?" Lewis blinked twice. "Not even when you kill him 76.3% of the time? Hardly a creature of control, are you?"

Lewis was beginning to feel the rage return. How dare she do this to the Primogen of the Brujah!

"You do not have the right to the name Brujah. You are an animal. I am doing my best to discover if there is the slightest talent left in your bloodline, anything left of the True Brujah. We have played this scene countless times, and we will play it countless more until I am satisfied. Eventually, you might start to see beyond your limited temporal vision and remember something. Until then we shall continue."

Lewis felt something ripple around him as she closed her eyes. The world begun to spin, and he felt dizzy and sick.

He stopped for a moment, pausing to catch an odd feeling of déjà vu, but that was apparently all it was. Then he noticed a woman across the street tapping on a tablet.

Tempus Fugit

A man asks a psychic if he can truly see into the future, to which the psychic answers in the affirmative. So the man punches the psychic in the face. As the psychic lies bleeding on the ground, wondering what he did to provoke such violence his attacker leans over and says "I bet you didn't see that coming!"

We hear that joke a lot.

It is a valid question, though. How could a Clan with a command over time itself fail to predict their own demise at the hands of their childer? Undisciplined, uneducated, rebellious, thuggish childer at that? But we did see it coming. It was our choice to let it happen. I should admit that we were still caught by surprise in many ways. I will leave aside the usual arrogant bluster that we were somehow tricked or betrayed to other Clans. Denial is only a salve for the ego, and we are here to learn, not play the pissing contests of other Kindred.

While we did fail to stop the usurpers, we were not unprepared. In fact, we had been planning for it for quite some time. It simply happened earlier than expected. From the very beginning, we foresaw that Kindred society was doomed, and our only way to survive was to remove ourselves from it. We planned to become hidden and forgotten, to escape the Jyhad that will destroy everything.

Visions of Betrayal

To those in the modern nights, the idea of Kindred slaughtering each other is not unusual. In fact, the idea of us living together in peace is both strange and a little frightening. In the days of the First City, however, even though we were still blood drinking monsters, the Kindred seemed to get along. One suspects the presence of Caine may have had something to do with this.

But we could see a change was coming. Every time we were able to peer into the future, it was one of blood and vengeance. It was not hard to see where this might come from. The monster within us lies close to the surface. We are one of the few Clans to exercise any real control over our passions. So we were able to calculate the outcome of what we were seeing: the Kindred will feed upon themselves until none of us are left.

So we took the only sensible course of action. We decided to leave them all to their fate. We began to stockpile resources and quietly acquire the most valuable lore we could find. The necessity for secrecy required us to take our time. We are patient creatures if nothing else. Our work ensured than many supposed "lost texts" remain hidden in our archives.

We thought we would have more time to prepare, but the Jyhad began its first slaughter much earlier than predicted, with the culling of the Second Generation. We took no part in this as a Clan, but that is not to say some Brujah were not involved. Many younger Kindred joined the Third Generation in destroying their leaders just for a sip of their precious vitae.

A New Hunger

After this brutal betrayal, those who had drunk the blood of the Second Generation were never quite the same. Something primal had risen inside them. Blood became more than just sustenance. Anger became rage and frenzy. Fear became terror. Behind it all was the siren call of elder blood and a desperate urge to taste that sweetest of nectars once more.

Among our Clan, the difference was more pronounced. Perhaps our passions, held in check for so long, burst out with a greater hunger. Kindred society had changed forever, and those of ours who had partaken seemed infected with this passion more than most. They burned with a rage that was almost alien to us, and one that few understood well enough to control. Troile was among the worst. He (or she of course, depending on your source material) may have been embraced as a scholar, but after the fall of the Second Generation, he knew rage like no other.

Unfortunately, many of those infected with this overwhelming rage had no desire to control it. Instead, they reveled in it. Our Clan gradually became two separate factions; those who remained pure of the new taint and those who cast aside the peace of studious calm for the instant gratification of rage and passion. These new Brujah were hungry and dangerous, and wanted everything right now. They refused to apply any discipline to the study of time, and learnt only as much as they needed to make themselves faster and more deadly. They eschewed their studies to run in packs and hunt—often more for entertainment than to feed.

The final straw came when Troile, the leader of the new Brujah, decided to claim control of the Clan. We foolishly believed there was enough of the old Brujah within him to negotiate, but we were naïve to assume so. Troile and his followers fell upon Brujah at their meeting, his uncontrollable hunger forcing him to murderous rage against his progenitor. That very night, we left it all to Troile. His followers hunted us across the city, murdering any who lingered. But once that carnal act was complete, they had no stomach to hunt us further.

But we had foreseen this. While we lay in tatters as a Clan, we were purged of the weak and immature among ourselves, and better for it. Were it not for the fall of the Second Generation, we might never have separated the unfit from our own numbers. "Clan" or "bloodline" are just names and really mean nothing. The eldest and cleverest of us survived, and the greatest lore was now hidden in our secret archives. We were free of the Jyhad, outside the eternal struggle that would consume the other Kindred eventually. It might not come for millennia, but we have always played the long game. To us, this was ultimately a victory.

Second Chances

We did make one attempt to restore our Clan to what it was. The traitor Brujah were still our brothers and sisters, and we felt they were owed one more chance, even after all their crimes. They were simply errant children who didn't know better, and we hoped to educate them so they might blossom once more.

So, a few of us returned to infiltrate the Clan. The Kindred had spread like a poison across the world, and it was a simple matter to slide back into the low ranks of our brethren. We remained on the sidelines and observed, and to our surprise, found something of us still remained among the new Brujah. They were still brutal and angry, but some of them still yearned for the peace of study. Many were frustrated by the anger that destroyed their focus and dreamed of regaining the control they had lost so long ago.

There was hope, and so we began to steer them towards a great new project. Together, we built a city called Carthage. It was a place of learning, a place of peace and prosperity. We tried to live together with the kine, in a symbiotic relationship instead of as predator and prey. Mostly we did this as infiltrators, but we were able to reveal our true nature to a few of the elders. We held great hope for the Clan and the future.

But the Jyhad could not be denied. We blame the Ventrue as its tools, but it might have been any Clan. The hunger resided in all of them, turning them into animals once more. When the city fell, we hoped the new Brujah would come to us. If the city burned but we reclaimed our own from their passions, it would be a victory.

But it was not to be. As their enemies crashed against the gates, the new Brujah did not look to save the lore that had been gathered; instead they gave way to anger and rage. They left the books to burn and took up arms to claim vengeance against the Ventrue and their allies. We let them burn with the city, sad and ashamed that we could not save our brethren from themselves. But we did not leave without righting one old wrong. A group of us came upon Troile, wild with bloodlust and rage, and buried him in sand and time. His punishment was long overdue, and the balance needed to be redressed for his crimes. Perhaps without the worst of them, the fallen Brujah might find some measure of control, though they were lost to us now.

An Alliance Against the Jyhad

As centuries passed, we continued our work. We had secreted great stores of lore, and in time even the usurper

Brujah forgot about us. With little interest in anything requiring patience or effort, and no longer possessing a love of learning, the traitor Brujah ignored us. We continued to record, study, and research, quietly rescuing valuable texts before human or Kindred wars destroyed them in needless waste. We often created disasters when kine began to notice so much was missing from their vaults. Do you believe the great library of Alexandria burned down by accident?

While we have remained in the shadows, we were not insensible of the need for allies. However, we sought such allies from among the other supernatural creatures, wary of trusting to our own kind. Old fears and animosities were nothing more than racism and bigotry, and we have found like minds among strange bedfellows. One constant in all such preternatural scholars is a disappointment in the others of their kind who fail to place reason above violence and paranoia. It is from these groups and loose alliances that the western arm of the Tal'Mahe'Ra was born.

Did you not know that the Tal'Mahe'Ra had two arms? Well, it's of no consequence. As it once was, the Western Tal'Mahe'Ra was all we really required. However, everyone had to have a voice, and not every voice was to our liking. Times changed, new alliances were made, and the modern Tal'Mahe'Ra was born of such treaties. We have remained a part of it because it still serves a purpose. But its goals no longer truly suit us. It has become part of the all-consuming Jyhad and even expanded their war beyond the Kindred. We wonder sometimes if the Tal'Mahe'Ra may be the instrument that brings destruction to the entire world. But that is not our concern. So we do as we always have, and keep enough distance to remain apart.

In these modern nights, we do our best to walk the tightrope between knowing where our enemies lie and taking part in the politics of the Kindred. Our wisdom in avoiding the power struggles of the bloodthirsty has proved its importance time and time again. When the Anarchs began murdering their elders, we were far away. When the Camarilla rose to slaughter their rogue childer, we were forgotten. When the Sabbat nearly tore itself apart in civil war, we were ignored. As it has been, so it will always be. We will be waiting at the end, as we were at the start. We will close the book on the affairs of the Kindred when they have finally destroyed each other. Then we will see what a world we can make without them.

Hidden in the Folds of Time

Just as the Ventrue have interests beyond the Camarilla and the Lasombra look beyond the Sabbat, we are more than our association with the Tal'Mahe'Ra. It serves a purpose, that is true, but centuries of compromise with its other leaders have forced us to follow agendas outside its goals. In truth, the Tal'Mahe'Ra has always been something of a quandary for us. To be without the allies and protection it provides is to risk destruction and the loss of all we have collected. However, to be a part of the Tal'Mahe'Ra is to be a part of the Jyhad, which is the source of all destruction.

We have made it our business to be the acquaintances of many but the friends of none. There are many Kindred and mages who know of us, and have even called upon our assistance. But we always receive swift payment in one form or another. Those acquaintances we do have are among the oldest and most powerful, for childer are rarely of any use to us, and we know the elders can keep a secret. In fact, many do their best to hide what they know of us, in case their enemies make use of our services. In such a way, we have passed into legend amongst the young and ignorant.

Our assistance is available to all; we take no sides. But we make no pledges of allegiance or wait to call on favors. Our dealings with others are short term and paid in full. To do anything else is to be drawn into the Jyhad.

Among the Kindred

We do not play well with others, as I suspect you have come to conclude. The reasoning is simple; to be part of vampire society is to risk utter destruction. We saw the weakest among our own Clan turn upon us. But the young have always revolted against the elders, who have often kept them in slavery. The other Kindred seem at peace with this slaughter. The Tremere rose to destroy an entire Clan, and now get invited to Kindred gatherings as pillars of the community. The Lasombra and Tzimisce rose to power on a reputation of patricide. The Giovanni may have culled those who made them immortal, but the Nosferatu tremble in fear at the mere mention of their elders. Vampires are a sickness, and they will all turn on each other given time. It is up to us to protect ourselves and wait out the storm.

Having said that, we do find ourselves dealing with two other Clans more often than any others. The Giovanni may have been usurpers, but they are fellow academics. They have a similar ethos to us: that playing too much of a part in Kindred politics is a bad idea. We do not trust their intentions,

of course, but we have learned they will usually keep their word. Their studies into death magic may also make them useful allies if we need to remove the Tal'Mahe'Ra one day. We can learn much from these necromancers, as long as we remember not to let them get too close.

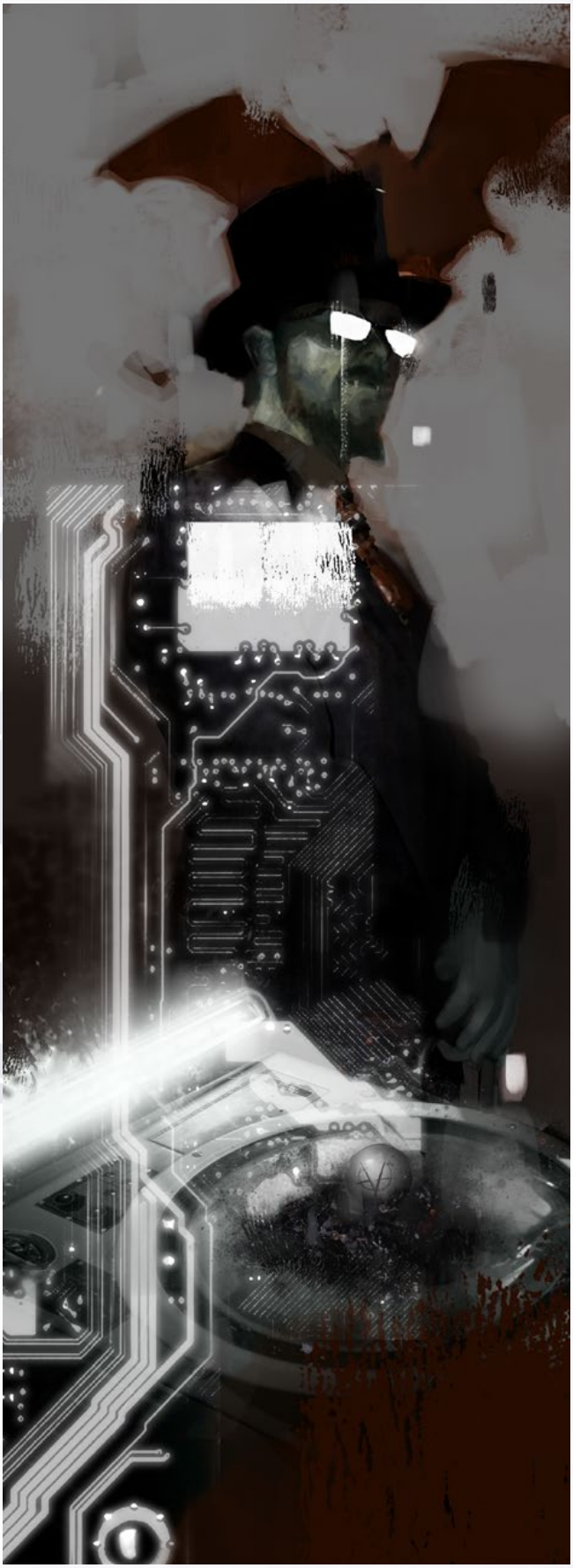
The other Clan we find a kinship with is the Followers of Set. They are lying, despicable cheats who give snakes a bad name, but we find there is a certain honesty in that. They do not pretend to be anything they are not. As they remain outside the Camarilla but keep a hand in its politics, they prove useful information brokers. I will also admit we find their dedication to the old lands a little comforting. They have not forgotten the First City, and remember their history better than most.

Then of course there are the traitor Brujah. We are divided on what to do with them. Some of us want them extinguished without mercy. Others believe they will tear themselves apart sooner or later, so why make the effort? A few of us infiltrate the Clan to keep an eye on them. But it is hard to play their childish games, and exhausting to pretend to be angry all the time. At least they are little more civilized than the Sabbat. Those monsters are little more than animals in human form, and we usually kill them in the same way one might crush a wasp or a scorpion. Better to destroy them before they have a chance to sting you.

The most useful part of vampire society for us are the Anarch Free States. There is little organization or control there, allowing us to move with ease and learn what we can. The false Brujah are also plentiful here, enabling us to keep an eye on their movements and agenda. From the Anarchs we can often make a move into the Camarilla or Sabbat if need be, once an identity is established. So this rabble has proved a useful stepping stone, but I suspect will never amount to any more than that.

Technology and Science

We are not just collectors of lore, but also students of it. With the vast resources at our command, we stand on the shoulders of giants when it comes to scientific advancement. While it is too dangerous to share the fruits of our labor with other Kindred or the kine, we do release some advancements into kine society when we need humanity to catch up. Now you would think that any scientist, given eternity and the best resources, would be able to change the world, cure cancer, develop true artificial intelligence, and more. Unfortunately, it has proved not to be the case. While our scientists are both dedicated and extremely intelligent, they are not innovators. It seems that the spark of creation and inspiration turns to



ash when we become Kindred. It is a problem that haunts many of our most academic elders.

That is not to say we waste our time, though. While we rarely innovate, we are very, very good at making improvements. Our technology does little that is new, but works much better and faster than its modern counterpart. This can often be an advantage, as it makes it easy to hide among less advanced equipment. For instance, our computers are simply faster than those available to humanity, even if they are not intelligent or organic.

We often keep our greatest advancements safely locked away, but some are granted for private use by Clan members. In many cases we use our technology to lure promising kine to work as researchers for us, where we might take their ideas and build on them. Most will never know anything of their supernatural connection; for a select few, however, it will be an apprenticeship before they join the Clan.

Factions

The Unmakers

While many of us see our fall from Clan status as a blessing, a few do not. These tormented souls, the Unmakers, believe the traitor Brujah stole what was rightfully theirs and must pay for their crimes. Unmakers seek out the new Brujah and slaughter them where they can. They pay special attention to destroying those in power to weaken the Clan as a whole. So while it is not unknown for them to slaughter whole gangs, they more often take their time stalking and executing Brujah elders.

As a Clan, we do our best to stop these fanatics, who have so coldly and logically decided on wholesale slaughter. Their actions are neither subtle nor secret, and threaten to bring the Camarilla down on us when they are discovered. While the Unmakers are good at finding other scapegoats, such as the Assamites, the Sabbat, and the Lupines, their operations remain a danger. Currently the Camarilla believes them to be a group of Brujah antitribu, but if the rest of the Kindred world were to uncover the truth about the Unmakers, we cannot predict how the Camarilla will react.

While their wanton and short-sighted violence is a danger, it is not the most problematic agenda of the Unmakers. Not content to try their ham-handed retribution in the present, they also use their temporal skills to push further back in time, looking to undo Troile's treachery. They seek to send back a group to destroy him, or even save the Second Generation from their fate and prevent his corruption. While many of us think their ethics laudable, we fear they are not weighing the impact of that much time being unraveled. The risk, for most, seems to outweigh the potential gain, especially considering there is little chance they will succeed, despite having reportedly obtained the help of several mages.

The Guardians

As a group, our main agenda remains as it has always been: to study and to understand. But we realized the Jyhad would burn everything in its wake, and mankind could not be trusted with knowledge and secrets. So a few of us work to preserve the lore we collect, that we might create a vast reference library and save it from the ravages of time and ignorance.

While each of us maintains a library of our own, as a group the Guardians manage vast archives, hidden in vaults across the world. We share their locations with no one, and rarely even talk of them between ourselves. Each vault is curated by a powerful elder and several assistants. While secrecy is their main defense, it is not their only one, and vast efforts are made to ensure their sanctity from natural, man-made, and supernatural dangers alike.

The items and lore stored in our vaults are priceless and irreplaceable. Each main vault is also protected from time, to preserve their contents. While some contain scrolls written in the hand of Caine and others have lost texts from biblical times, all remain as new as the day they were made.

We guard these places jealously, but we are not hoarders. Everything we have can be read and studied by anyone we trust. Knowledge is a living thing. It must be shared and understood or it is worthless. However, we must be careful who we share with. Whatever is requested is brought to a secure location and must be returned later. No one is allowed to browse our libraries to just pick what they want!

Guardians often remain in the vaults, for it is hard to leave such a trove of learning. Each vault is attached to labs and study areas, and many of our number have spent centuries working on theories and studies. However, those who serve are not prisoners, and can choose to leave for another life if they so wish. There is never a shortage of True Brujah looking to take their place.

Those who leave the vaults often use their knowledge of antiquities to help hunt down lost or stolen items. While we are extremely careful about who we loan resources to, our trust is not always repaid, and greed has made some people foolish in their dealing with us. We always make sure those who betray us cannot do so again, but sometimes the original lenders cannot recover the artifact stolen from them. In those cases, we send someone — often a former vault Guardian — to follow the trail and recover the lost items. There are also always rumors of legendary items that would be better in our safekeeping. So many Guardians take a more active role upon leaving the vaults to hunt down and reclaim these items for the Clan.

Character and Traits

Concepts

Negotiator

You have always had patience. In fact, it is a constant source of annoyance to you how little control most people have. They need someone like you to arbitrate; someone who can keep their head and not be over emotional. It is your job to help people come to a mutual arrangement, or to accept hard truths and make the only deal they can. Your clients were once managers and union leaders, now they are Princes, Clan leaders, and even a few Sabbat bishops.

You have to walk a careful tightrope, as plenty of people blame you for their own mistakes in negotiation. But a calm demeanor and a logical mind are your best weapons. Neutrality is always key; if you have nothing to gain, you have no reason to cheat. It makes it easier to see the lies and tricks that those you are helping are trying so hard to employ.

Scientist

You always enjoyed study, but never felt you had enough time. Something always got in the way, and you often felt that others would have to continue your work after you died. But now you can fulfill your own legacy. The Clan provides you with funds and an advanced laboratory. You repay their support by advancing your field and adding to their knowledge. Unfortunately, you do not work alone, and there is a complicated game of politics for prestige and resources for your projects.

As long as you can keep learning, you care little for the outside world. You have done little work to expand your vampiric powers. Instead you have chosen to focus on advancing your knowledge. However, a little Fortitude comes in handy during lab accidents, and Presence is always a good way to secure more funding.

Thief of Antiquities

You love old things. However, libraries and museums were never enough for you. You like to hold and touch the past. There is something wrong about keeping these artifacts locked away in dusty vaults, slowly rotting away. So you have chosen to liberate them, and see them put in better hands.

You have become a highly specialized cat burglar. Security systems can rarely keep you out, but you are not a thief. Well, not to your mind anyway. You are reclaiming the past, removing it from private vaults and museums to pass it to the Clan. You have had to become very discerning, as you don't have time to waste stealing a fake.

Merits and Flaws

Advanced Tech (1-5 pt. Merit)

You have a device (or possibly a few) of an advanced design. While the True Brujah are not especially good at innovation, they are good at making improvements. So this device has no special functions unavailable to its contemporaries, but it does work a lot better. It reduces the chance of a mechanical fault (such as a jam) by half and all uses of the device are made with a -1 to the difficulty. The Storyteller should decide on the cost of the Merit, depending on how many items the character has, and how powerful they are.

Fatalist (3pt. Merit)

The character's study of time has led them to believe that what is done is simply done. Destiny is a fixed path and therefore we are all the slaves of our own futures. As such, nothing can truly be our fault, for nothing is entirely under our control. It therefore becomes a lot easier to excuse themselves from their worst excesses. The character subtracts 2 from the difficulty of all degeneration rolls against losses of Humanity or Path of Enlightenment.

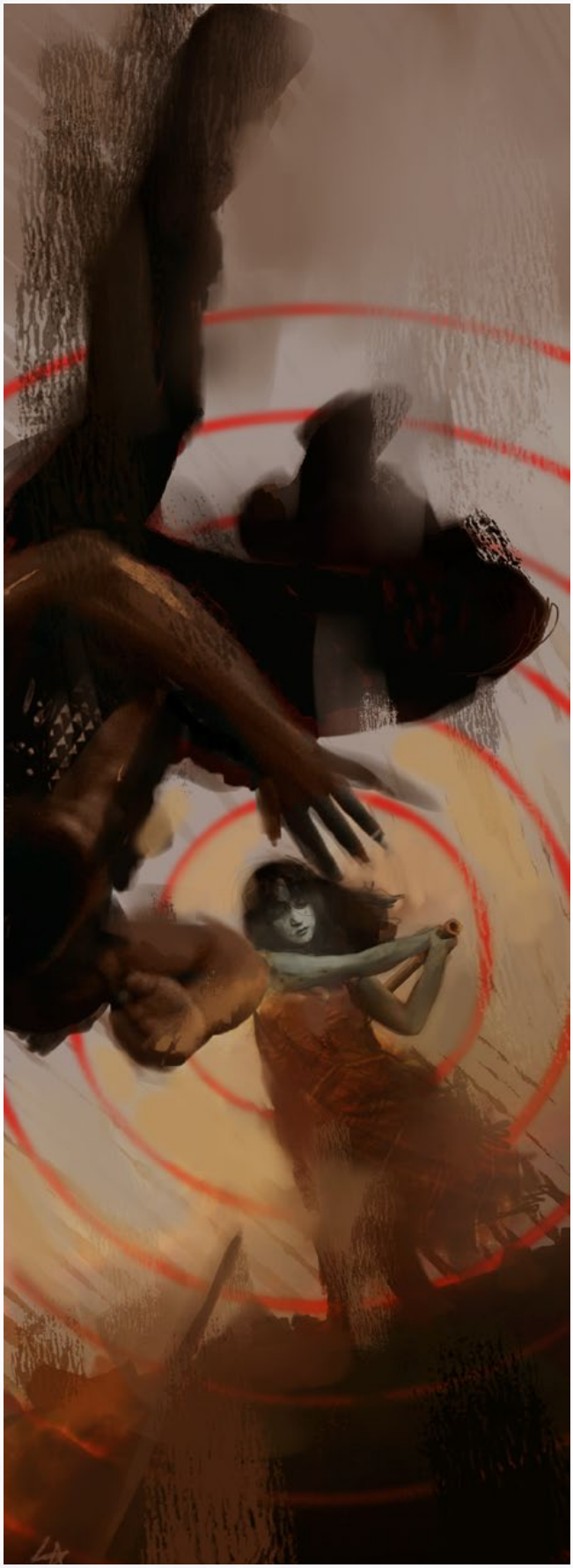
True Celerity (5pt. Merit)

The True Brujah have an odd relationship with Celerity. It often comes easily to them, but a few refuse to learn it, as it has become a symbol of the traitor Brujah. However, many find it a useful skill for masquerading as Brujah within the Camarilla or Sabbat, and so a few True Brujah have developed a slightly different form of the Discipline.

A character with this Merit has the ability to learn True Celerity. While it works exactly the same as Celerity, it feels very different. Instead of the character moving quickly, they slow time down all around them. This Merit confers no Discipline points for the character, but does allow it to be bought with experience as if Celerity was a Clan discipline. While this power functions the same as Celerity, it cannot be taught to anyone who does not have any levels of the Temporis Discipline.

Out of Phase (2pt. Flaw)

The character is a little too aware of time and the possibilities surrounding them. People often seem to be in slightly different places, and speech frequently echoes in their ears. They see layers of alternate timelines in too



much detail. Any perception rolls they make are at +2 difficulty, as they try to see past the unreal.

Combination Powers

Old Friend (Presence ••••, Temporis ••••)

This ability has proved invaluable to True Brujah infiltrating the ranks of their betrayers, or even other Sects and Clans. It makes the target believe the True Brujah is a very old friend, one who is trustworthy and loyal. They remember spending time together and several instances where the True Brujah has proved themselves beyond reproach. While this may appear to be an advanced application of implanted memories, it is actually a lot more. The True Brujah finds an alternate timeline that fits the required relationship and imprints it on the target, using Presence to bond feelings of trust and friendship. This makes it very difficult to detect and unravel, as the memories are real and were (in a sense) actually experienced by the target, even if they never actually occurred in this timeline.

System: The True Brujah must make physical contact with the target (often a handshake) and begin to describe a potential memory they share by way of introduction. They then make a Manipulation + Empathy roll at a difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower. The number of successes shows how long the effects last.

Successes	Result
1 success	One scene
2 successes	One night
3 successes	One week
4 successes	One month
5 successes	One year

While under the power's effects, the target will believe the True Brujah is both loyal and above reproach. Even evidence to the contrary will be considered part of an elaborate conspiracy. Once the power fades, the target will still consider the True Brujah a friend, until something calls their motives into question. If the target is still under the effects of this power, attempts to refresh the effects for a longer duration are made at +1 difficulty.

This combination power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Jackhammer Punch (Potence ••, Temporis ••)

Getting punched with Potence is always painful, but with this power you force your opponent to relive that pain

over and over again. The True Brujah uses their control of time to seemingly repeat a strike several times at the same time. This leads to a great increase in damage from only a single attack.

System: When a True Brujah strikes in unarmed combat and opts to use this power, they may spend a blood point to add their Temporis rating as extra points of Potence when figuring the damage they have done.

This combination power costs 12 experience points to learn.

Elder Disciplines

Insight (Temporis ••••• •)

Insight allows the Brujah to step forward in time a little and see how certain actions are going to play out. This allows them to return to the present and use this information to perform their next action with greater skill and ability. As they return a moment before they set off, the only evidence of this power is a shimmering around the character as they return.

System: The character spends a Willpower point and makes a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) to see how much they can remember and understand of what they saw. Each success they make grants them an additional die to their dice pool for their next action.

Temporal Understanding (Temporis ••••• •••)

With this power, the True Brujah steps further ahead in time to follow the actions and consequences for a lot longer. Thus, when he returns to the present, he has a greater understanding of how to best resolve his actions.

System: This ability works in a similar way to Insight (above). The character spends a Willpower point and makes a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) to see how well they understand what they saw in the future. Each success grants them 1 temporary Willpower point. These points can be used in the same way as (and in conjunction with) Willpower points, except more than one can be spent on any roll. These points are gone once used, and also vanish at the end of the scene.

Rewind (Temporis ••••• •••)

The True Brujah usually use this power to confirm historical events, but many find it useful to discover the secrets of their peers and their enemies. When this power is used, it appears as if time is moving backwards at the character's command. But in truth the True Brujah is only seeing images of what has happened here before. The ability only works in the area the character is in, and cannot show anything happening through walls. Ghostly images of what occurred in the area can be seen as far as anyone can normally see. So they can look out of the window and see what happened outside, but not see past a wall, even if it wasn't built until recently. Nothing is taken away, only added to. However, if you made a hole in wall you could see what was on the other side of it through the hole.

System: To activate this power the True Brujah needs to make a Stamina + Occult roll (difficulty 9) and spend a blood point. The result of the roll shows the maximum time they can rewind their view to.

Successes	Result
1 success	One week
2 successes	One month
3 successes	One year
4 successes	One century
5 successes	One millennia

Within this limit, they can look at any time they like, but they have to focus on a particular and specific time to go back to. If they don't know when they are looking for they will have to watch the images as they flash past and make a Wits + Alertness roll. The difficulty is equal to 5 + the amount of successes. It takes an hour to review every ten years, and after an hour, the character must spend another blood point to maintain the power. To conserve blood when looking into the deep past, the True Brujah might shift their view back 50 years, for instance, before starting to make Wits + Awareness rolls as they know what they want to see happened 50-100 years ago. In this way, visions of the ancient past might take several attempts before the True Brujah finds the right area of time to focus on.

Lore of the Bloodlines includes:

- The history, lore, and nightly practices of nine bloodlines, told from the perspective of the Kindred themselves.
- New combo Disciplines, powers, Merits, Flaws, and other rules specific to each bloodline.
- Revisions and updates of more classic Vampire: The Masquerade material to V20.